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Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

Mongane Wally Serote

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION

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LEADING ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION

The following statement was issued by the South African Communist Party in January 1988 following a plenary session of the Central Committee:

One of the central questions of the South African revolution is the leading role of the working class. This is an issue of immense theoretical and practical significance not only in the making of the revolution but also in measuring how far we are on the road to realising our objectives and in mapping out the way forward.

The Constitution of the South African Communist Party adopted at its sixth Congress in 1984 restated our aims in the following terms:

> "... The Communist Party aims ... to organise, educate and lead the working class in pursuit of this strategic aim (i.e. ending the system of capitalist exploitation and establishing a socialist republic based on the common ownership of the means of production) and the more immediate aim of winning the objectives of the national democratic revolution which is inseparably linked to it.
>
> "The main content of the national democratic revolution is the national liberation of the African people in particular, and the black people in general, the destruction of the economic and political power of the racist ruling class, and the

> establishment of one united state of people's power *in which the working class will be the dominant force* and which will move uninterruptedly towards social emancipation and the total abolition of the exploitation of man by man."

The relationship between the national democratic revolution and socialism requires a correct understanding of the relationship between class and national struggle. This in its turn reflects upon and is informed by a correct understanding of the role of the working class and its mass and vanguard organisations.

Theory divorced from practice is a poor guide to revolutionary action. The two go hand in hand, reinforcing, modifying and enriching one another, deepening our understanding and sharpening our revolutionary practice.

Against the backdrop of this perspective and the events of the past year the Central Committee of the SACP devoted special attention to assessing the state of the working class of our country.

Crucial Point

The struggle in South Africa has reached a crucial point. The ruling class has conceded that it cannot rule in the old way. At the same time it has not given up the dream that it can find ways to ensure the dominance of white power in perpetuity. In this it is bolstered and underpinned by the support of the leading imperialist powers. "Power-sharing without giving up control" has become its guideline as it desperately attempts to fend off the struggle for the transfer of power in South Africa to the people. Beneath the welter of ad hoc solutions which pass into oblivion as fast as it hatches them, the enemy continues to nurture the belief that it can maintain its rule by the exercise of sheer force. Hence the attempt to destroy the revolutionary alliance headed by the African National Congress and its military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe, to annihilate the mass democratic movement in all its formations, combined with bludgeoning and brow-beating the independent states of Southern Africa in a bid to convert them into client states. These are the necessary and essential conditions for realising its schemes.

Thus, side by side with its political patchwork stratagems, there is consistency and continuity only in the regime's spiralling repression and aggression which have reduced its own parliament into a rubber stamp of the military-security establishment, with industry and commerce held firmly in tow. In an important sense the current state of emergency differs from previous states of emergency: the Botha regime is using the state of emergency as a smokescreen to stealthily construct and refine the State Security Management System. Composed of the State Security Council and the Joint Management Centres, this system has become a State within the State and a sinister expression of rule by the military-industrial complex.

The People Fight Back

This, however, is only one aspect of the South African reality. Despite the state of emergency and rule by terror into which the State has woven and licensed the blood-stained deeds of the vigilantes, the determination of the people not to be ruled in the old way shines through, growing stronger by the day.

At the ideological level, the unity of purpose of our people has been immeasurably strengthened and deepened by the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the United Democratic Front and its affiliates and contingent after contingent of the organised workers including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In keeping with the nature of oppression and exploitation in South Africa and the class forces it generates, this process is reinforced by the developing interest in and adherence to socialism by workers and youth.

Organisationally, despite its frenzied efforts and murderous schemes, the enemy has failed to dislodge and isolate our Party and the ANC from the people. Umkhonto we Sizwe has multiplied the blows it is striking against the enemy. And the mass democratic movement has shown an increasing capacity, in the face of rampant State terrorism, to survive, develop new methods of work and, in several instances, expand and consolidate its base.

Outside our borders, the resolve of the peoples and governments of Southern Africa has grown firmer. The campaign to isolate apartheid South Africa has intensified. Those governments which have long nurtured and encouraged the intransigence of the racist regime are finding themselves besieged by their own people.

This advance is being made against a massive counter-revolutionary offensive by the Pretoria regime. It has been registered in the face of painful setbacks on many fronts, more particularly at the level of mass structures at both the grassroots and national levels.

Shift in Balance of Forces

Neither the complex pattern of contradictory forces nor the enemy's determination to pursue a policy of repression at home and aggression abroad behind a wall of silence through press control and censorship can obscure the shift in the balance of forces in favour of the people that has been taking place over the past years.

Even before the year had ended it became clear that the events of 1987 are destined to have immeasurable significance in the further development of the struggle and the future of South Africa. The key to such an understanding lies in the state of our working class.

1987 underlined the transformation that has been taking place during the past decade at the level of the organised workers. Within the short space of two years COSATU has imprinted itself on the industrial scene as the dominant trade union federation. Its membership, which stood at 450,000 paid up members at its launch on 1st December 1985, has surged to over one million today. The fragmentation and proliferation of unions which characterised the upsurge of unions, especially African unions, in the 1973-1985 period has been superseded, since the emergence of COSATU, by mergers leading to the restructuring of unions on the basis of the slogan "one industry, one union". Within COSATU this has led to the development of 13 industrial unions with 31 local shop steward councils and an industrial army marshalled by 50,000 shop stewards in the factories and 20,000 shaft stewards on the mines. The right-wing tendency towards economism has been roundly defeated and militant unionism moved firmly into the front trenches of the struggle for people's power with the adoption of the Freedom Charter by COSATU and its affiliated unions.

In this context it is useful to note that total registered trade union membership for the entire country stood at 1.7 million as at 31 December 1986; that this figure comprises working people of all racial groups including whites. This means that over 50% of the unionised workers of South Africa are in the militant union sector. At the same time we need to bear in mind that the total work force of the country is about 9 million. Accordingly about 20% are in unions, and the progressive unions account for just over 11% of the total work force.

Growth of Strike Movement

The worker militancy which underlines the emergence and growth of COSATU is clearly reflected in the growth of the strike movement. Figures released by the regime for 1986 showed that during that year 793 strikes had resulted in 1,308,952 work days lost. In contrast, by the end of August 1987, 5,5-million work days had been lost through strike action — already the highest figure in our history and more than four times the number of work days lost during the whole of 1986. The 5,5-million work days lost does not include the effect of the May 6 and 7 and June 16 "general strikes" which were by far the biggest and most highly organised stay-aways.

Some of the major and significant strikes during the first eight months of the year included the ten-week national strike in OK Bazaars led by CCAWUSA; the twelve-week South African Transport Services (SATS) strike by 16-20,000 railway workers; two major strikes in the postal sector in April and June, the latter involving 16-20,000 workers; strikes at the Tongaat sugar mills in Natal, the Sapelkoe tea estate in Natal and the Magwa tea estate in Transkei whose unions tried to organise farmworkers; the strike by 5,000 workers at SASOL's Secunda plant in July. A massive national strike on July 14 by some 80,000 metalworkers had to be called off after one day because it was effectively made illegal by an extraordinary Government Gazette. Then there was the largest strike in South Africa's history — the August 9 miners' strike involving 340,000 workers led by the NUM which lasted three weeks.

The storm centre of this stirring strike movement is located in the workers belonging to COSATU unions. As for UWUSA, which had been spawned by Inkatha for no other reason than to bolster its hegemonic designs and to undermine COSATU, its performance was true to the tradition of Buthelezi: it did not participate in a single reported dispute, and showed no solidarity with the millions of workers of our country who are engaged in a life-and-death struggle. Rather, what little evidence there is of its existence, indicates that it has sought to mobilise workers in Northern Natal to engage in vigilante-type action against workers who are fighting the bosses and the racist State.

In contrast, unions affiliated to the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) were involved in some significant strikes. The SA Chemical Workers' Union was involved in major strikes at SA Pharmaceuticals and AECI, while the Black Mining and Construction Workers' Union was active in smaller mine disputes mainly in the Northern Transvaal.

This epic performance by the workers acquires added significance if we take into account the regime's determination to annihilate the mass democratic movement of which the trade union movement is an integral part. Indeed COSATU and its affiliated unions have endured, side by side with other formations of the mass democratic movement, some of the most vicious attacks by the State, Inkatha and the vigilantes.

Storm in the Townships

So far the main brunt of this repression and terrorism has had to be borne by the townships, the street and area committees and the UDF. To the everlasting credit of our workers, while fighting back on every front, through the trade unions and particularly under the banner of COSATU, they unhesitatingly moved forward to confront the bosses and the State and transformed the mines and the factories into battlegrounds. Their militancy and determination demonstrated that the trade unions are charged with the mass anger that has fuelled the township revolt which exploded on the SA scene in 1984.

The growth of COSATU, its success in establishing unions on the basis of one industry, one union, the rooting of the living wage campaign on the factory floor, the spiralling strike movement which includes workers who still await to be drawn into unions — all this points to other crucial factors which are decisive for the liberation struggle.

Foremost among these is the fact that it is the migrant workers who constitute the backbone of the union movement. The leap into the strike movement reflects not only their resilience but a level of political consciousness which the liberation struggle has always sought to stimulate. As was apparent in the historic miners' strike, the migrant worker came of age in 1987. This underscores (1) how deeply the political crisis generated by apartheid has penetrated the oppressed and exploited masses of our people; (2) the structural crisis of the capitalist system in South Africa; and (3) the level of impoverishment in the rural areas which the system has sought to hide away through the Bantustan fraud.

In spite of the rise in the price of gold the SA economy remains in a deep-seated crisis. In 1985 there was a 1.1% decline in the gross domestic product. In 1986 there was a 0.5% rise. With the 3% annual population increase this signals a continuing drop in living standards. In addition unemployment, which is in-built in the system, has reached unprecedented levels and now stands between 3 and 4 million. Industry is stagnating for lack of sufficient markets. World demand and world prices for South Africa's traditional exports are declining and every phase of economic growth stimulates massive import increases which result in balance of payments deficits and increasing foreign debt.

A large portion of national wealth is squandered to maintain the apartheid state, its army and police, the arms industry and the costs of sanctions-busting. Rampant inflation, falling standards of living, increasing unemployment, the low value of the rand, balance of payments and budget deficits, are all manifestations of the crisis.

Poverty in the rural areas which have been devastated further by eight successive years of drought, and wages that have fallen by 20% in real terms since 1986, underlie the resilience and militancy of the workers in strike action.

These giant strides taken by the workers and the trade union movement must also be measured against the tasks ahead. The first amongst these is the difficult but critical need to organise the 3-4 million army of unemployed in our country. Their existence is necessary to the survival of the capitalist system. They are used as a direct threat to the organised workers' struggle for a living wage and for improvements in working conditions. They are a social formation within the oppressed to which the State and employers turn to scab on striking workers. Recent events underline the capacity of the State to recruit the vigilantes and the blacks in the SADF and police force from the unemployed.

All sections of the oppressed people, including the militant trade union movement, have a direct interest in organising the unemployed. This is a task that the trade union movement must tackle in a systematic way. It is a task that we dare not postpone any longer. It is a task that can only be undertaken by the trade unions, side by side with campaigns by the rest of the broad democratic movement to dissuade unemployed workers from serving in the vigilantes, the SADF and the SAP.

COSATU-affiliated unions are registering impressive gains in winning over those workers who were formerly organised in unions affiliated to the now defunct Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). These gains need to be built upon by developing concrete and practical tactics to win over *all* those who belong to the ex-TUCSA unions. In order to accomplish this task we shall have to devise ways to encourage and harness militancy and radicalism among the Indian and Coloured workers. This applies in equal measure to other unions which remain outside COSATU.

Thirdly, there remains the pressing issue of unionising the farm workers and those in the Bantustans. From a strategic point of view, these three tasks are of critical importance for the advance of our revolution.

These and many other tasks such as the prosecution of the living wage campaign, taking the Freedom Charter on to the factory floor, have to be undertaken within the context of ever-increasing repression. As we have noted, COSATU has had to bear a considerable weight of the State action aimed at annihilating all formations of the mass democratic movement. Precisely because of the progress and the epic battles waged by the unions during 1987, the enemy is determined to escalate its war against COSATU and the trade union movement in general.

In this connection, side by side with State and State-sponsored terrorism, there is the forthcoming amendment to the Labour Relations Act. The thrust of the proposed amendment is, as Minister du Plessis terms it, "to redress the present imbalance in favour of the unions". The regime aims to achieve this by encouraging, facilitating and fostering minority unions, by making it virtually impossible to hold a legal strike, by illegalising sympathy and secondary strikes as well as boycotts and by widening the scope of employers to retrench workers.

The proposed amendments are a frontal attack on COSATU and militant unionism. At the same time, they introduce an added dimension to the regime's determination to crush the entire mass democratic movement. As such, not only the trade union movement but the mass democratic movement in its entirety must wage a relentless and joint campaign to defeat this enemy manoeuvre.

Politics and the Unions

The trade union movement is the most important mass contingent of the working class. The very nature of capitalism, the fact that the capitalist state exists in order to facilitate exploitation of the workers and acts in defence of the bosses, teaches the workers that it is impossible for their trade unions to stay out of the broader political conflict. In our country, where the overwhelming majority of the workers — the black workers — are also subjected to national oppression, conditions are even more favourable for the workers to understand and to shape their trade unions in the mould of militant revolutionary trade unionism.

Throughout the history of trade unionism in South Africa, communists have consistently undertaken the task of organising the workers into unions and combatting tendencies which sought to isolate and confine the trade union movement to purely economic issues. As we noted earlier, the demise of TUCSA and the rise of COSATU have meant the overall defeat of the right wing tendency known as economism.

At the same time, side by side with this ideological victory, conditions have arisen where the acceptance by the majority of unionised workers that there can be no artificial separation of the economic sruggle from the broader, overall political struggle tends to blur the borderline between militant trade unionism and political leadership of the working class as a whole, as well as the question of the leading role of the working class in the national liberation struggle.

It is important to grasp the fact that this blurring of the borderline is the result of our own successes in ensuring the existence and dominance of a militant trade union centre. The effect of the rising political consciousness of our workers, their deep and abiding interest in the overthrow of the capitalist system has given rise to an upsurge in workers' organisation and socialist thinking.

At the same, this means that our Party needs to conduct its ideological and organisational work with greater intensity and at a higher plane which takes into account these concrete realities.

Given the ferment, it is not surprising that considerable confusion prevails in some quarters of the movement. Every revolution involves the ferment of ideas, which is a necessary condition for the sharpening of revolutionary theory and practice. In such a ferment, side by side with the views coming from serious and committed revolutionaries, there are the sometimes naive views of those who are still searching for a way toward an abiding revolutionary commitment. There are also elements who thrive in sowing confusion, planting divisions, because they have no serious discipline and commitment. And there is also the enemy.

None of this should deter us. Rather, we should grasp this rising tide of interest in national liberation and socialism as a unique opportunity to further develop the political consciousness and organisational skill of the workers of our country.

We communists are particularly well equipped to engage constructively in this debate. Not because we have a monopoly of truth. Not because we are infallible. But because we believe in the unity of theory and practice, and because we are equipped with the science of Marxism-Leninism. Accordingly, we stand to learn from experience and from others. We engage not only because we wish to teach others but to sharpen our own understanding, find solutions which will enable the working class to fulfil its historic mission.

The Advance to Socialism

Much of the confusion and lack of clarity surrounding the leading role of the working class and what this means in terms of working class leadership arises from the way in which we understand the main content of our immediate and longer term revolutionary objectives and the interconnections between them.

The failure of the various ultra-left groupings to grasp the continuing and inseparable inter-relationship between class exploitation and national oppression and to understand that the main immediate content is the achievement of the national democratic revolution, which is a revolution of the entire oppressed people, is the source of their confusion and lies at the root of their divisive activities.

It is this fatal flaw in their analysis that leads them to the conclusion that the working-class struggle must be confined to the immediate struggle for socialism. In place of an understanding of the dialectical link, in terms of both distinction and continuity, between the struggle for national democracy and the struggle for socialism, they erect a discontinuity and antagonistic contradiction between the two facets of our struggle. In practice they approach the working class and its interests in a narrow and mechanical way.

Along this line of reasoning the different varieties of ultra-leftism end up by effectively seeking to get the working class "locked up within itself", as Lenin put it so precisely. Some equate the trade union movement with the working class movement and from this position seek to convert the trade union movement into a political party. In this way they confuse the primary mass contingent of the workers, which is the trade union movement, with the vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party.

How are we to ensure that the victory of the national democratic revolution will mean an uninterrupted advance of our society to the socialist revolution? The first condition for this is that the working class never succumbs to seeing its task as merely leading itself. As a class we maintain the class independence of the Communist Party and the trade union movement in order that we "should fight with all the greater energy and enthusiasm for the cause of the whole people, at the head of the whole people". (Lenin)

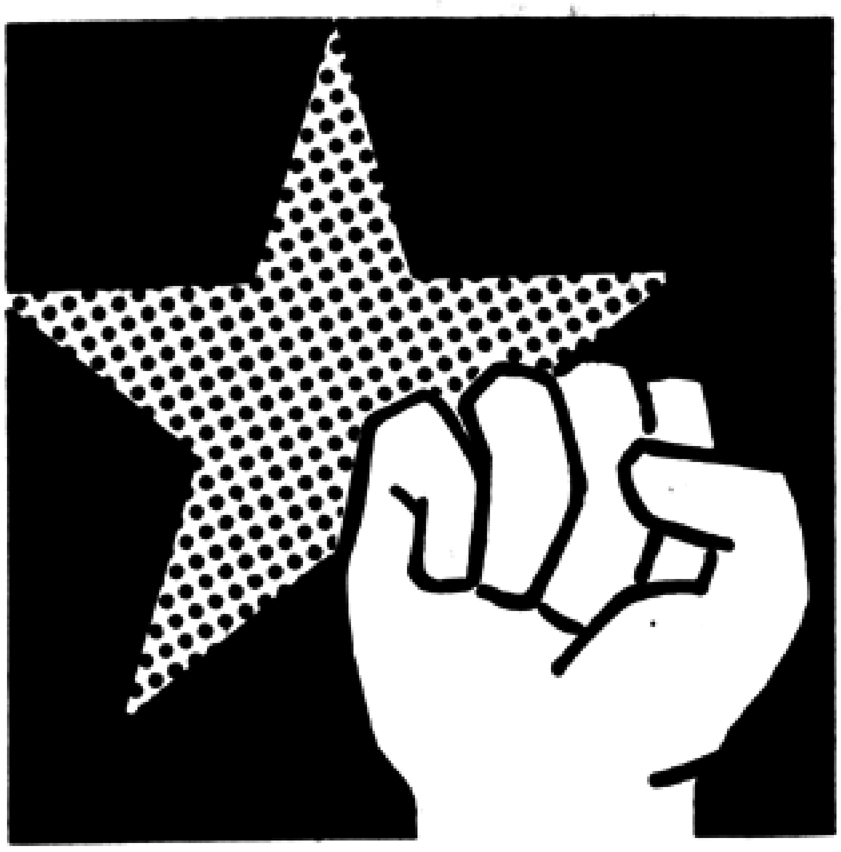
In order to "fight for the cause of the whole people" we have to understand that the cause of national liberation is also the cause of the working class. In order to "fight at the head of the people" we have to understand that in the South African context the working class must be seen to be acting not only in its own interests but also in the interests of all the oppressed classes and strata. In practical terms this means that the working class must be fully engaged in all formations — the ANC, the SACP, the trade union movement and other formations of the mass democratic movement and in Umkhonto we Sizwe. It is only by occupying the front trenches of the national democratic struggle that we shall ensure not only the triumph of democracy but also the uninterrupted advance to socialism.

The question therefore is not merely: how do we establish working class leadership? Rather it is: how do we enhance and deepen the role of the working class as a class and extend the relationship of this class with other classes in pursuit of national democracy and socialism. Put this way the issue of asserting its role as the dominant class force in the present democratic phase has nothing in common with approaches which see the question of working class leadership as something to be imposed by bargaining with political organisations in the national liberation movement.

Real Democracy

We believe that real liberation can only be complete with the socialist transformation of our society, that real democracy can only be complete with the achievement of socialism. In this regard, communists have been in the forefront not only in establishing trade unions but also in ensuring that the unions are founded on and develop the practices of direct democratic participation. This has also meant that we have consistently struggled to ensure that the workers themselves rather than officials exercise real control over their own organisations. As communists we have upheld these positions not only because we believe that humankind will gain true control over its destiny and fully realise its humanity under communism but also because we have a vested interest in ensuring the fullest democratic participation of the people now. This interest springs from the certainty that before the tribunal of the workers and all those who are oppressed and exploited the solutions that accord with their objective interests will triumph.

The record of struggle of 1987 is therefore pregnant with promise for the future. Tempered in struggle the working class of our country took giant strides in upholding and advancing the national liberation struggle and the cause of socialism.



EDITORIAL NOTES

DEATH SQUADS MUST BE DEFEATED

The mayhem which has surrounded the city of Maritzburg in recent months is by no means confined to that area. Today the regime is relying more and more on the use of vigilante and death squads to ensure the implementation of its policies.

The declaration of a state of emergency gives the regime powers to rule by force, together with a blanket immunity permitting police and soldiers to commit any crime in defence of apartheid and escape challenge in the courts. In fact, the state of emergency is nothing new in South African history. A state of emergency has been in operation in South Africa ever since white minority rule was first established. The denial of the franchise to the black majority of the population is in itself a declaration that the South African constitution rests on lawlessness and the use of force in place of the consensus which should underlie the operations of a democratic state. By what right except the gun did the whites first arrogate all power to themselves? By what right except the gun do the racists still defend white supremacy today? The declaration of a state of emergency merely brings out into the open what goes on all the time under the hypocritical slogan of "law and order". Whose law? Whose order?

We are told that the number of dead in the Maritzburg region alone during the last 18 months is about 500. Who's counting except the police? And who can believe anything they say? The police have a vested interest in exaggerating the number of casualties because it helps to reinforce an image of "black on black" violence which supposedly undermines any black claim to exercise power. But if the length of the casualty list is the bench mark, surely it is the white racists who are shown to be incompetent to rule. What about the 1,000 or more slaughtered by the police in the 1976 Soweto uprising? The 69 at Sharpeville and 5 at Langa in 1960? The thousands of victims of police and military brutality during the emergencies since 1985, the tens of thousands whipped, teargassed, detained and tortured, the rising number of political executions? What about the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children killed by South African troops and agents in Mozambique and Angola, not to mention the attacks directed against the other frontline states? Is not all this proof not only of the incompetence but also of the criminality of white minority rule?

A Racist Concept

The regime — and the media — refer to what is going on today in Maritzburg and other areas as "black on black violence" as though that automatically reduces its significance. It is time to acknowledge that the very use of the term "black on black violence" is racist. Is black resort to violence only meaningful when it is directed against whites? Do whites — in South Africa and elsewhere — never fight one another? Why is it expected that blacks must be united while the luxury of disagreement and dissent is reserved for whites?

If such a phenomenon as "black on black violence" exists it is merely because blacks are segregated into ghettoes under the Urban Areas Act, the Group Areas Act and other apartheid laws. It is obvious that while the overwhelming majority of the African people support the policies of the African National Congress, a minority supports other movements and some can even be found to side with the regime. Why is it understandable that a township African should throw a stone at a white policeman but not a black one? Why should black opponents of the regime not be expected to take measures to counter the activities of the black allies and agents of apartheid?

It should be remembered that half the South African police force is black, and that increasing numbers of blacks are being recruited for service in the South African military.

What is going on in Maritzburg is part and parcel of the struggle of the people for national and class liberation. The violence has not come from the side of the liberation movement, but from the regime and its allies, who resort to force because they cannot tolerate opposition to their policies. As we have pointed out, the laws themselves are instruments of the white minority for maintaining white minority rule. Blacks had no hand in framing these laws but are expected to carry them out. When they object, force is used against them. The Communist Party, which had functioned legally since 1921, was outlawed by the present regime in 1950, and the Act which was used to outlaw it was later used to outlaw the African National Congress and other organisations of the people fighting for the implementation of the Freedom Charter. Anti-communism has been the weapon wielded by the regime in its bid to crush and cow its opponents, and in the name of anti-communism all sections of the people have seen their democratic rights whittled away. Today nobody in South Africa, black or white, has the right to hold a public meeting; the press is censored; habeas corpus has been suspended; the tricameral parliament itself, which is supposed to be the forum of the people, is subordinated in the exercise of its legislative and administrative functions to the demands of the regime's security organs.

In a sense the regime's increasing resort to vigilantes and death squads is a measure of the advance which has been registered by the anti-apartheid forces in the struggle to render the country ungovernable. With all its "legal" abuse of its illegal power, with all its bribes and promises, the regime has been unable to defeat the people, to "restore law and order". So now it breaks its own laws, clothes its mercenaries in balaclavas, and sets out on a cold-blooded campaign to liquidate the people's leaders. The overwhelming majority of those killed in this so-called "black on black violence" are leaders of the UDF at all levels, trade union organisers, youth activists, students, officials of opposition parties and organisations in the bantustans. Where the police and the military failed to eliminate the Crossroads squatter camp, the vigilantes succeeded with their ruthless night savagery. And the same state-backed ferocity is being unleashed in every part of the country.

Part of the System

In many centres the state is encouraging the incorporation of the vigilantes in the apparatus it is trying to set up for the administration of the urban townships. Vigilantes are being transformed into community guards and municipal police to protect the councillors who exercise power in spite of the fact that 95% of their electorate rejected them. In Natal Buthelezi's police force is being given control of some townships in a bid to achieve the success which was denied to the ordinary South African police.

In all centres the police hold the ring while the vigilantes go about their filthy business. It is a fact commented on by many local and overseas observers that the police only go into action when the tide of battle turns against their proteges. In Natal thousands of anti-apartheid activists have been detained without trial on the grounds that they are a threat to "law and order", but we have not heard of similar action being taken against a single member of Inkatha. It is members of the UDF who have to apply to the courts for protection against the police or the vigilantes, not vice versa.

In other words, what we are witnessing at Maritzburg and elsewhere in the country is not "black on black violence" at all, but state and state-aided terror against the people's organisations, leaders, cadres and activists. It is the illegal regime and its allies resorting to the ultimate in illegality and vicious brutality in defence of white supremacy.

There can be no doubting that the democratic cause has been gravely damaged by the regime's terror tactics. Many of the outstanding leaders thrown up by the upsurge of recent years have been killed, and those still active know that there is a price on their heads, that to oppose the regime in any way is to invite a death sentence. The task of organising the people to defend themselves has been made immensely difficult. Meetings have to be held in secret. Trade union offices are bombed. Three members of the National Union of Mine Workers are on death row and leaders such as Moses Mayekiso are also threatened with the death sentence. The members of street committees are charged with treason, or simply disappear after being taken from their homes at dead of night. Most of the UDF leadership is in prison, in hiding or in exile.

The problem confronting the people is how to cope with the vigilantes and death squads when any form of resistance brings down on their heads the full might of the security apparatus which has failed to defend them in the first place. There is little point in lodging a complaint at the police station, or even bringing a court action, because the law is not an impartial arbiter but an instrument devised by the enemy to protect his own interests. Nevertheless, every form of legal pressure should be used, if only to bring to public notice the horror of what is going on.

But above all the people are learning from their own experience that the only effective defence against the violence of the regime and its vigilantes is their own strength. They are studying the methods of underground organisation and communication because, although one by one all legal avenues are being closed, they are not prepared to fold up and surrender. If street committees cannot meet openly they must meet secretly. If the UDF can no longer hold mass public rallies, it must find other ways of organising and mobilising the people, other ways of maintaining morale and building the people's confidence in their ability to fashion their own future on the lines set out in the Freedom Charter.

Armed Struggle

In the final analysis the present crisis is proving to the people the correctness of the liberation movement's decision in 1961 to embark on the road of armed struggle. When the enemy is killing, torturing and maiming on a mass scale without restraint, the people must be given the means to defend themselves. Today, as never before, there is need for Umkhonto we Sizwe to be fashioned into the spear and shield of the nation it was intended to be from the outset. Weapons must be put into the hands of the people and they must be trained and organised to use them. When the vigilante knows that he will get an appropriate answer, he will not be so keen to knock on your door in the middle of the night.

However in the long run the defeat of the vigilantes, Inkatha and other allies of the regime must be sought in the political field. Leaders like Buthelezi, who devote most of their time to attacking the ANC, UDF and COSATU, must be exposed and isolated; their followers must be brought into the democratic camp. All activists and supporters of the liberation movement must ensure that intensive political work is carried out at the grassroots level to promote understanding of the aims and methods of the movement and to strengthen its democratic structures. For every activist who is arrested or murdered, ten recruits must be brought into the fold. The underground must be extended and consolidated so that it is capable not only of withstanding the attacks of the regime but also of going over to the offensive and implementing the people's programme for social change.

In this Year of United Action for People's Power, let the people give an effective reply to the regime and its agents and allies on all fronts.

THE FIGHT FOR PEACE

The agreement signed in Washington last December by U.S. President Reagan and CPSU General Secretary Gorbachov for the elimination from Europe of all intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles is without doubt of historic importance. It is the first treaty providing, not merely for control of production but for the destruction of a whole class of weapons capable of devastating the entire European continent. True, the number of warheads to be scrapped amounts to only about 4 per cent of the total available to the two parties, each of which retains an arsenal of nuclear weapons capable of wiping out all human life on this planet. Nevertheless, what counts is the signal each side is giving to the other. Both are declaring that it is a good thing that the nuclear arms race should be curbed, that existing stocks of nuclear weapons should be scaled down, and it has been agreed that they should come together during 1988 to negotiate a 50 per cent cut in strategic nuclear weapons as well. A process has been started which must not be allowed to go into reverse.

The world is a safer place today because some people in high places are beginning to believe that peace is possible. Not all. President Reagan said right-wing conservatives who opposed the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) treaty did so because they believed war was inevitable. Clearly, he is declaring to the world that he believes war is not inevitable and that it is a good thing that steps should be taken to strengthen the peace process. Perhaps his continued advocacy of SDI (Star Wars) is inconsistent with his protestations. Nevertheless, by taking a public stand for peace, Reagan is testifying to the fact that the global pressure for peace today is irresistible. Whatever his hidden agenda, he obviously believes that he personally, as well as the administration he represents, the military-industrial complex which dominates the US economy, and his NATO allies would lose out if they were seen to be wilfully obstructing humankind's hunger for peace.

No country has made a greater contribution towards the peace process than the Soviet Union. It was the CPSU in Lenin's time that first advanced the policy of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems and has adhered strictly to that policy during the 70 years that have elapsed since the October Revolution. Had Soviet peace policies been reciprocated by the western countries during the 1930s, Hitlerism could have been contained and the Second World War with all its terrible costs in men and materials avoided. In the post-war period the Soviet Union has again and again advanced proposals for ending the nuclear arms race, and again and again been rebuffed. Nothing better demonstrated the genuinesness of the Soviet approach than its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing in 1985/86 — a moratorium which it was prepared to make permanent but which elicited no response from the United States.

Yet the very persistence of the Soviet peace offensive, backed by the growing influence of the peace and mass democratic movements throughout the world, has forced the imperialist powers on to the defensive, compelled them to return to the negotiating table, and eventually produced the INF treaty, opening up perspectives for further advance on the road to nuclear disarmament and the final elimination of the threat of nuclear war. But just as there is no easy road to freedom, so there is no easy road to peace, which will only be achieved through struggle. For lasting peace depends on the final elimination of the contradictions which lead to conflict and war, and the bulk of these contradictions are generated by the capitalist system, which is based on the private ownership of the means of production, including the production of weapons of war, and the pursuit of private profit at the expense of social justice.

Class Struggle

We live in the era of transition from capitalism to socialism and communism; we live in an era of national liberation struggles. History has given the working class the responsibility and the means to bring about the revolutionary transformation of the old society and the creation of the new. The policy of peaceful coexistence does not mean the abandonment of class struggle, yet in the nuclear age it brings with it an inescapable need to redefine the parameters within which class struggle must be waged. Avoidance of nuclear war becomes a primary objective, because humanity cannot survive a nuclear war.

In his report "October and Perestroika: the Revolution Continues" delivered to the joint meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Russian Federation in Moscow on November 2 last year, Mikhail Gorbachov pointed out that Lenin's policy of peaceful coexistence was needed at first to create a breathing space for the consolidation of the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union. He added:

> "Continuing the class based policy of the victorious proletariat, peaceful coexistence later, particularly in the nuclear age, became a condition for the survival of the entire human race."

Despite all the profound contradictions of the contemporary world, despite all the radical differences between countries, we live in a world which is "interrelated, interdependent and integral.

> "The reasons for this include the internationalisation of world economic ties, the comprehensive scope of the scientific and technological revolution, the essentially

> novel role played by the mass media, the state of the Earth's resources, the common environmental danger, and the crying problems of the developing world which affect us all.
>
> "The main reason, however, is the problem of human survival. This problem is now with us because the development of nuclear weapons and the threatening prospect of their use have called into question the very survival of the human race".

There was a time when the US administration believed in the possibility of winning a first strike victory in a nuclear showdown with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's achievement of nuclear parity with the US, and above all a realisation that any nuclear exchange would lead to mutual destruction, have changed all that, although some neanderthal elements remain in positions of influence and power in the US and are pushing the Star Wars concept as hard as they can, striving for a superiority which is unattainable because even the "first striker" will be committing suicide.

The CPSU has long been stressing that there is no realistic alternative to peace, and if Gorbachov's ratings in international opinion polls are anything to judge by, it is his role as a peacemonger that has most impressed itself on world public opinion and finally forced Reagan to make an adequate response by appending his signature to the INF treaty in Washington last December. Nor is the Soviet Union's peace policy a temporary or opportunistic phenomenon, the velvet glove concealing an iron fist. The notion of "world conquest" or "the export of revolution" with which critics charge the Soviet Union was ruled out from the very first days of the revolution. It was Trotsky who wanted socialism to be carried to other countries by revolutionary war, and Trotsky was defeated on this issue because the CPSU endorsed Lenin's view that revolutions could not be engineered from outside but flowed from the development of contradictions and class antagonisms inside society. The fight for peace has been a central plank in each CPSU programme. The third programme, adopted at the 27th Congress of the CPSU in 1986, declared:

> "The most acute problem facing mankind is that of war and peace . . . In the present-day world, which is riddled with acute contradictions, and in the face of impending catastrophe, the only sensible and acceptable way out is the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems".

Presenting the report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress, Mikhail Gorbachov said:

> "We are firmly convinced that promoting revolutions from outside, and even more so by military means, is futile and inadmissible".

In his November 2 speech last year celebrating the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, comrade Gorbachov made it clear that the concept of peaceful coexistence did not mean isolationism or the abandonment of the policy of proletarian internationalism. The Soviet Union continues to render moral and material support to revolutionary movements throughout the world, including our own. It remains convinced that communism is the only realistic alternative to capitalism. However, Gorbachov added:

> "Life has corrected our notions of the laws and rates of transition to socialism, our understanding of the role of socialism on the world scale. It would never occur to us to claim that all the progressive changes in the world are due to socialism alone. However, the way the problems of vital importance to humankind have been posed, the way solutions to them are being sought show that there is an inseparable link between world progress and socialism as an international force."

It is the strength of world socialism and the progressive forces allied to it which has made possible the achievement of a nuclear balance and the signing of INF and similar treaties. But it is not only nuclear war that threatens the stability of the world. Chernobyl and other accidents have brought home to everybody the realisation that scientific and technological advances carry with them dangers which can only be avoided by international co-operation. There are the challenges posed by the exploration and conquest of outer space. The growing economic imbalance between the rich and poor nations based on the exploitative policies of the imperialists and transnationals also threatens the world with tensions which undermine peace.

In the solution of these and other problems the Soviet Union is committed in the first place to a policy of dialogue rather than confrontation, and Gorbachov stressed that since nuclear war was impermissible, the Soviet Union was aware that "a safe world will have to be built jointly with the capitalist countries". He went on:

> "Since an alliance between a socialist country and capitalist states proved possible in the past, when the threat of fascism arose, does this not suggest a lesson for the present, for today's world which faces the threat of nuclear catastrophe and the need to ensure safe nuclear power production and overcome the danger to the environment?"

Tough Questions

In the context of the world-wide capitalist and imperialist policies of anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism, in the atmosphere of the cold war, such a proposition undoubtedly appears novel if not controversial, and Gorbachov himself pointed out that it raises what he described as "tough questions".

Question No. 1: Since imperialism is the major source of the threat of war, what are the reasons for believing that the capitalist class, which profits from the egocentric laws of exploitation, can accept the fashioning of an integral world in which universal human values have top priority?

Question No. 2: Can capitalism function without militarism?
Question No. 3: Can capitalism survive without neo-colonialism and inequitable trade with the Third World?

The answers to these questions would be provided in due time, said Gorbachov, but in the meantime he put forward some thoughts of the CPSU Central Committee. In the first place the capitalist countries were no longer so keen to settle their differences by war as they had been in the past, and had embarked on "a kind of latter-day 'peaceful' repartitioning of the world", economic wealth being the deciding factor.

Secondly, the economies of some capitalist countries — Japan, West Germany, Italy — had developed without militarism in the early post-war period, although it is true that when the miracle was over they had switched to militarism again. But the experience of the US had shown that dependence on militarism led to an astronomical national debt and other problems reflected, for example, in the recent panic on the New York stock exchange.

Thirdly, the growing debt of the Third World countries was creating problems for the capitalist countries themselves, and it was becoming clear that disaster for everybody on a global scale loomed unless a new international economic order was established.

Finally, the capitalist world would have to reckon with the fact that the peoples of the world were no longer passive objects of manipulation and exploitation but were determined to have a hand in determining their future.

Gorbachov's peace appeal to the world's people has had an overwhelming response and forced the warmongers to retreat on all the main fronts. But appeals and resolutions for peace must be backed by sustained mass action, a continuous peace offensive, if they are to be effective and the swords finally beaten into ploughshares.

NEW VIEW OF SOVIET HISTORY

Gorbachov's report delivered in Moscow on November 2 deserves study by Communists everywhere. It is divided into three sections:

1. A survey of 70 years of Soviet history.
2. The meaning of *perestroika* and the reorganisation of Soviet society.
3. Soviet policies in the international sphere, including the fight for peace.

The first part is of fundamental importance because it presents the judgment of the CPSU Central Committee on a number of episodes, and is a balanced assessment of achievements and failures. The report stresses the continuity of Soviet progress and makes it clear that perestroika cannot be interpreted as a repudiation of the past, despite criticism of past errors. The policy of glasnost (openness) applies to history as well as current affairs, and Gorbachov announced the appointment of a commission to examine new facts and documents pertaining to alleged acts of repression. A special commission has also been set up by the Central Committee to produce a new treatise on the history of the CPSU. This was necessary, said Gorbachov, not only out of regard for historical truth and respect for the memory of the innocent victims of arbitrary and lawless actions, but also because a truthful analysis of past mistakes would facilitate the implementation of *perestroika* and the necessary reorganisation of Soviet society.

Gorbachov said the task of restructuring Soviet society after the revolution was complicated by the fact that "not all Party leaders by far shared Lenin's views on some of the most important problems. Besides, Lenin's recommendations could not encompass all the concrete issues concerning the building of the new society".

The character of the ideological struggle was complicated by personal rivalries in the party leadership. With some their petty-bourgeois nature took the upper hand and they adopted a factional stance. One such was Trotsky, who after Lenin's death "displayed excessive pretensions to the top leadership in the party, thus confirming Lenin's opinion of him as an excessively self-assured politician who always vacillated and cheated". The Trotskyites did not believe in the possibility of building socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement and went astray in both foreign and domestic policy. However, the majority view prevailed, the Trotskyite opposition was crushed and "the party's leading nucleus, headed by Joseph Stalin, had safeguarded Leninism in an ideological struggle".

The Central Committee report is emphatic that the course followed in the spheres of the collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation during the 1920s and 1930s was correct. In fact, no other course was possible if the country was to be taken from the era of the sledge-hammer and wooden plough to an advanced industry in the shortest possible time, for in the conditions of capitalist encirclement, without this the Revolution would have been destroyed. By the end of the 1930s the Soviet Union had been advanced to first place in Europe and second place in the world for industrial output.

"This was a labour exploit of epoch-making significance, an exploit of liberated labour, an exploit of the Bolshevik Party".

However, a heavy price was paid. The rigid centralisation which produced results in industry was "impermissible in tackling the problems of refashioning rural life". Collectivisation was "in the final analysis a transformation of fundamental importance in consolidating socialism in the countryside", but it was tackled in the wrong way. "The basically correct policy of fighting the kulaks was often interpreted so broadly that it encompassed a considerable part of the middle peasantry too". In the years since the Revolution the middle peasant had become a staunch and dependable ally of the working class, but was then alienated by the flagrant violations of the principles of collectivisation that began to occur everywhere.

Impermissible Methods

The administrative-command system which had begun to take shape during industrialisation and which had received a fresh impetus during collectivisation spread to the superstructure, "retricting the development of the democratic potential of socialism and holding back the progress of socialist democracy ... An atmosphere of intolerance, hostility and suspicion was created in the country ... Many thousands of people inside and outside the party were subjected to wholesale repressive measures". There was the development of the personality cult.

Gorbachov said:

> "There is now much discussion about the role of Stalin in our history. His was an extremely contradictory personality. To remain faithful to historical truth we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains, and the gross political errors and abuses committed by him and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society.
>
> "It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know of many instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so. The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations.
>
> "Contrary to the assertions of our ideological opponents, the Stalin personality cult was certainly not inevitable. It was alien to the nature of socialism, represented a departure from its fundamental principles and therefore has no justification."

Despite these deformations, socialism survived and developed.

> "Neither gross errors, nor departures from the principles of socialism could divert our people, our country from the road it embarked upon by the choice it made in 1917. The momentum of the October Revolution was too great. The ideas of socialism that had gripped the masses were too strong".

All this was brought out forcefully in the grim trials of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45. Gorbachov rejected emphatically the attempts of Western ideologists to saddle the Soviet Union with the blame for the Second World War. Surveying the rise of the fascists in Germany, Italy and Japan and the course of aggression on which they embarked, he showed how the Soviet-German non-aggression pact signed on August 23, 1939, was the only response possible for the Soviet Union in answer to the policy of appeasement adopted by the Western powers in their bid to incite a fascist attack on the Soviet Union. As a result of the pact the Soviet Union won a breathing space in which to make better preparations for the attack by Hitler Germany on the USSR which was ultimately inevitable.

When war came, "the aggression to which we were subjected was a merciless test of the viability of the socialist system, of the strength of the multinational Soviet state, of the patriotic spirit of Soviet men and women. We withstood this test by fire and sword, comrades!"

The Lesson of War

The whole people rose in defence of the motherland. Gorbachov paid a moving tribute to the Soviet soldiers and their leaders who had played such an outstanding role in winning the war, and he went out of his way to add:

"A factor in the achievement of victory was the tremendous political will, purposefulness and persistence, and ability to organise and discipline people displayed in the war years by Joseph Stalin". But, he stressed,

> "the moving spirit behind all our efforts on the battlefield and at work was our Leninist party. At the front and in the trenches communists were the first to rise to the attack, their example inspiring others: in the rear they were the last to leave their workbenches, the fields and livestock farms.
>
> "Soviet men and women, as never before, sensed that the communist party was their party and that communists were showing in practice what it meant to be the people's vanguard at a time when the flames of war were raging and when the issue was one of life or death".

Gorbachov's historical survey ended with an analysis of developments in the post-war period. He dealt with the violations of socialist legality in the early 1950s, and the reforms introduced after the 20th and 22nd party congresses. Under Khruschev the CPSU leadership began to criticise the personality cult and its consequences and to re-establish socialist legality.

> "The old stereotypes in domestic and foreign policy began to crumble. Attempts were made to break down the command-bureaucratic methods of administration established in the '30s and '40s, to make socialism more dynamic, to emphasise humanitarian ideals and values, and to revive the creative spirit of Leninism in theory and practice".

Things began to look up. However in the later yearsof the Brezhnev era negative processes in the economy gathered momentum and many aberrations arose in the social, spiritual and moral spheres, distorting and deforming the principles of socialist justice, undermining the people's faith in it, and giving rise to social alienation and immorality in various forms".

A "pre-crisis situation" developed. The campaign of *perestroika* was initiated at the April 1985 plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee and given more elaborate theoretical and political formulation in the decisions of the 27th Congress in 1986 and subsequent plenary meetings of the Central Committee.

Gorbachov stressed that *perestroika* was not a sudden flash nor an about-turn without precedent in Soviet experience, but the continuation of a historically determined process of struggle.

> "The idea of *perestroika* rests upon our 70-year history, on the sound foundation of the basically new social edifice erected in the Soviet Union; it combines continuity and innovation, the historical experience of Bolshevism and the contemporaneity of socialism . . . it is the principal definitive message of our history that all these 70 years our people have lived and worked under the party's leadership in the name of socialism, in the name of a better and more just life."

The Gorbachov speech was delivered on the 70th anniversary of the Revolution to present to the world the judgment of the CPSU Central Committee on Soviet history and the nature of the tasks to be undertaken in the coming period. It is hard to overestimate its importance, not only for the Soviet people but also for the world.. The Soviet Union is not just another country, one of two super-powers engaged in an arms race for superiority, as the Western media and the pharisees of the ultra-left like to describe it. Ever since the Revolution the Soviet Union has occupied a special position in the thinking of friend and foe alike as the standard-bearer of the forces working for social progress, the ally and friend of the oppressed and down-trodden everywhere. Its successes and failures have had a special significance for progressives and reactionaries in every country, registering achievement or setback in the international class struggle. The words of Gorbachov have revolutionary significance and are analysed with a concentration and intensity never bestowed on the utterances of Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl, Botha and their ilk, who defend the interests of the haves at the expense of the have-nots. Under capitalism the haves have exercised power for centuries, while the have-nots are only now coming into their own in the era of the transition from capitalism to socialism and communism which opened with the Russian Revolution. When Gorbachov speaks of the future, everybody listens with enthusiasm or alarm depending on their class positions and interests. Nobody is indifferent.

At the same time, Gorbachov is not an oracle delivering messages on behalf of a supreme being whose judgment is infallible. He makes a statement on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee, many of whose conclusions are tentative because it is charting a course which has never been taken before. There are some formulations in Gorbachov's speech which are ambiguous, and which he has amplified in his book *Perestroika — New Thinking for our country and the world.* The implications of what he is saying, and of what is being attempted in the campaign for *glasnost* and *perestroika,* need to be considered by those in all countries struggling for peace and social progress. The CPSU is calling for new thinking in the new situation which prevails in the world today, and in the light of its history and the pre-eminent position which it holds in the world revolutionary process it deserves to be listened to with respect. We carry in this issue of *The African Communist* the comments on Gorbachov's speech delivered to the Moscow meeting last November by the SACP delegation, as well as a comprehensive review of his book on *perestroika.* These comments, and the Gorbachov theses, could well be the subject of study and discussion by all in the South African liberation movement, Communists and non-Communists alike.

GREETINGS TO GOVAN MBEKI

The following statement was issued by the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party last November:

The South African Communist Party warmly greets Comrade Govan Mbeki on his release from prison after 24 years incarceration.

We salute his courage and commitment which enabled him to withstand the pressures to which he was subjected behind bars, and wish him well in all his future undertakings. We commend his life as a demonstration that the fight for socialism is inextricably linked with the struggle for a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa on the lines laid down in the Freedom Charter.

The release of Comrade Mbeki throws a glaring light on the continued imprisonment of Comrade Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners who continue to suffer because of their opposition to the hated system of apartheid. We urge the people of our country and the world community to redouble their efforts to secure the unconditional release of all South African and Namibian political prisoners forthwith, and ensure that no restrictions are allowed on their right to speech, movement, association and assembly.

The release of Govan Mbeki must be regarded as, not the end, but the beginning of a mighty movement to empty South Africa's jails of all victims of apartheid.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE AFRICAN REVOLUTION

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Mongane Wally Serote in a Round-Table Discussion

A round-table discussion on the role of culture in the struggle for liberation and independence in Africa took place in London recently between the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the South African poet Mongane Wally Serote.

Questions were put by a panel of three liberation movement activists — Dr Francis Meli, Essop Pahad and Mandla Langa. The proceedings took place under the auspices of Inkululeko Publications, with Brian Bunting in the chair.

The following is an edited version of the verbatim transcript:

CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the two protagonists could give us a brief outline of what brought them to writing in the first place.

NGUGI: I am a product of two traditions of education. One is a peasant education. I grew up in a community where story-telling around the fireside in the evenings was a very important art of communication and values. Orature — that is oral literature — is rich in riddles, proverbs, stories, poetry and drama.

The other tradition is one of formal education in colonial schools. It was there that I first became aware of written literature. It was mostly literature by English writers. But when I went to Makerere University College in Uganda, I came across African writers like Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and also Caribbean writers like George Lamming. I had discovered a completely new world. Makerere was also an important centre of writing by students.

It was a combination of all these factors that inspired me to start writing.

SEROTE: It is not one thing that makes a person write, but a combination of factors. I began to take writing very seriously when I became aware that writing can become an instrument for liberation, can express what our people are fighting for.

I was fascinated by what a poet like Keats was saying about the English people. Then one discovered that there were other writings coming out of Africa. I remember very well reading *A Grain of Wheat* by Ngugi, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, and the biography of Evgeni Yevtushenko. It was a discovery for me that a writer can become, if you like, a medium through which society expresses itself. It was through Ngugi that I became aware of the issues facing the Kenyan people. It was through Chinua Achebe that I became aware of what was happening to the people of Nigeria. It was through Yevgeni Yevtushenko that I became aware of what war meant to the Soviet people. Because of all this I began to realise that writing can be used as a weapon for people to fight against oppression and exploitation.

Writers Banned

One other important influence, both politically and in terms of writing, arises out of reading South African literature. This literature was made illegal by the regime, as it banned the ANC and the PAC. Writers like Alex La Guma were banned and also their books. Others like Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Can Temba, Nat Nakasa had been forced to take one-way exit passports by the regime. Writers like Kgositsile and Peter Abrahams had left the country. All of them had written, inspired by the history of our people, the culture of our people, which had its basis in resistance against the apartheid forces and the struggle for freedom. They had all been witnesses to the fighting fathers and mothers in the defiance campaigns, stay-aways, strikes and boycotts and eventually the '60s when, through their organisations, our people took up arms to fight for freedom.

The novels, short stories, poems and plays of these writers were an exploration of how all of these events influenced relationships between and among people — their aspirations, their courage, fears and frustrations. So, for a young writer like me then, reading that literature and cultivating myself to become a writer, one was faced with a deep and serious conflict. The conflict arises out of a human and natural condition: that one must do one's best to develop. But what is the best: to seek fame and fortune? I did aspire to this and soon learnt through the experience of those before me that that is not for the oppressed and exploited to aspire to. The cost one has to pay for fame and fortune is alienation from the people. Alienation for a cultural worker is shame and death. And there are many kinds of death. The other alternative is to engage in a struggle for the creation of a livable world and future. That, I hope, is what eventually made and makes me write.

CHAIRMAN: You were both educated in schools that concentrated on English literature. Did your school curriculum include instruction about African literature?

NGUGI: I was educated during the colonial Kenya in the fifties and early sixties. The literary education we had was based on English literature. For instance, at Makerere I took a degree in English which meant a study of the history and development of English literature from say Shakespeare to say T.S. Eliot. Writing by Africans either in African or European languages was not part of the curriculum. In fact the syllabus at Makerere was entirely that of the University of London. So my own discovery of African writers was outside the framework of formal teaching.

I must say that the whole approach to literary education was very colonial, very alienating in that it made African students centre themselves in a tradition which was not really rooted in their historical experiences. And that is why my discovery of literature by Africans had such a shattering but positive effect on me — I was literally trembling with excitement.

SEROTE: Our schools were very regimented and people had no choice about what they learnt. We had no choice but to learn English. You were made to understand that without English you could not survive in the world. Because of this English meant two things. At one level one became fascinated with English. But at another level, because it was made to appear a matter of life and death, one became very fearful. At primary school you were told that if you failed English you would fail a class, and in key classes like standard 2 or standard 6 this might mean you would have to leave school. So one had this understanding of English — that it was a fascinating language but at the same time it is a language that threatens your life.

However, one must accept that English is a very developed language and if you cultivate yourself to become a writer, you begin to discover that there is no horizon for English. English can make you define, understand and express whatever you want to express in the world.

Tell The World

Coming from an oppressed society, coming from Alexandra Township, when you eventually come to accept and understand that you are a writer, you have no choice — you must explore the language so that you can tell the world about the conditions of your life, and the lives of the people you come from. At a certain point it is no longer important whether one speaks English as the English would want it to be spoken so long as one tells the truth about the lives of the people in a ghetto like Alexandra.

CHAIRMAN: Which came first — your interest in literature or your involvement in liberation? Or is it like the chicken and the egg?

SEROTE: In a place like Alexandra one had no choice except to become politically committed. Alexandra is a very closely knit community. If you talk about a yard in Alexandra, you are talking about a space where on the average 13 families live next door to one another. Like all the townships in South Africa, Alexandra was not created for free people with a progressive culture in a developed world. Alexandra was created to herd labourers. This is a very unnatural condition for human beings, and it was as a result of this that we developed the aspiration to be free. It is not surprising that Alexandra is one of the areas where the ANC had a very strong base. I recall many times when there were demonstrations, rallies, meetings, generally of the ANC. At a certain point in our lives, weekends were times when we were going to No. 3 Square to listen to what the ANC leadership were saying — Chief Albert Lutuli and many other leaders of the ANC.

You begin to search in a certain direction in terms of literature, to express the desire to create a better world. Coming out of Alexandra I was aspiring to become part and parcel of the energy that will create a livable world. I thought that one of the ways of doing this was to give expression to the condition of my people through writing and as one does this one begins to understand the size and depth of oppression. One also becomes aware that one has to become part and parcel of the force that is going to do away with oppression.

So which comes first? I don't think it would be proper to say this came first or that. I think throughout they were a complement to each other. Participation in the struggle became an inspiration. Because one wanted to express the condition of one's people, one also had to further understand what it is that made us become an oppressed and exploited people, what it was that was going to liberate us.

NGUGI: Your talk about Alexandra reminds me of my own growing up in Limuru, Kenya. Modern Kenya is a product of two dialectically opposed processes: that of imperialism or imperialist domination, and of resistance to domination or the national liberation struggle. As you know, Kenya was integrated into the British imperialist system from about 1888, first as a company property and later as a settler colony. This meant that land was forcibly taken away from the people and given to a white settler minority. Kenyan people's labour worked the very land taken away from them. People were also taxed and this went to build infrastructures for effective economic occupation.

Thus our labour, our capital, our land all helped develop the settler economy. This was effected through military conquest and the subsequent political domination and repression. But cultural domination and oppression were necessary for effective economic and political control. People's songs, poetry, dances, languages, education were attacked and often ruthlessly suppressed. British imperialism for us took the concrete form of economic, political and cultural settler occupation. Racism became the dominant ruling ideology.

National Resistance

But the other process — the more important process in the making of the modern Kenya — was that of national resistance. Thus the British occupation of Kenya at the end of the 19th century was resisted by the Kenyan people of all the various nationalities. This resistance continued in the twenties, thirties, forties and fifties, taking different forms but whose character as a national liberation struggle was being influenced by the intervention of the growing working class. The highest peak of this anti-colonial resistance was the Mau Mau or Kenya Land and Freedom Army which, led by Dedan Kimaathi, waged armed struggle against the colonial settler occupation from 1952 to 1962.

I went to school during that period of intense struggle. Some of my own relatives were fighting on the side of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army but others were fighting as loyalist collaborators with British colonialism. In a period of heightened political struggle, traditional ties of blood and region are torn asunder as people take sides in the liberation struggle and this was true of the Limuru and Kenya of my growing up. And there was no way this could not have left an impression in my life. So what's the connection between literature and that experience, at least in my own case?

It is obvious that English literature, the formal literature that I read in schools and colleges, was not talking about the experience we were undergoing in Kenya. In studying English literature I was living in a world of make-believe as far as it concerned my immediate environment. Not that English literature was entirely useless. You see, English literature has two traditions. One tradition expresses the culture of struggle, the culture of the working-class, the democratic aspiration for change and for a better life in a better society. The other expresses reactionary anti-people sentiments with stagnation and decay rather than social struggle being seen as more in tune with the human condition. Some of this literature, particularly when depicting people of the colonies, becomes downright racist and anti-human. But for me even that literature which reflected democratic sentiments for change was using as its frame of reference the British and the European experience of history.

A Voyage of Discovery

The discovery of African and Caribbean literature for me was a rediscovery of the world around me, a world of active struggle, a world ringing aloud with demands for change. Betrayal, treachery, but also heroism and glory — these themes in the live drama around me were distilled in the literature that I had discovered. I had come from a world where ordinary working people — the peasants and workers of Limuru — had risen to heights of glory in their struggle against the colonial giant and this was being confirmed in the written words and images of the new writers. In short, this African literature was largely anti-imperialist and this was clearly in harmony with the values for liberation that had driven thousands of peasants to the forests and the mountains to drive out the British colonial enemy from their soil.

PAHAD: Not all artists and writers in Kenya and South Africa have seen culture as their contribution to liberation. How do you see culture as a weapon in the struggle against oppression?

SEROTE: Maybe basically the question to ask is this: why does a writer write? When a writer writes, the most important thing is communication. This is the way we started, and this is how people gain political consciousness at a certain level at home. Blacks want to tell whites, everybody, about their conditions of life, and they want to talk to each other about them and what they are going to do. You have to take sides and you begin to say 'I am on the side of the blacks against the whites' or 'I am on the side of the people who are fighting against apartheid'. I was brought up in a community which had chosen to fight against oppression and exploitation; to have taken an opposite position would have been to sell out. I had made a choice to use writing as a means of communication among people, and as a writer who was part and parcel of the struggle my writing became a weapon.

NGUGI: Literature is part of culture. And culture is a product of the twin struggles with nature and with other humans to procure the means of our survival. But if culture is a product of our history — that is it evolves historically — it also reflects that history and the entire value system born of that history. Now in a situation where one nation or class is dominating another economically and politically, it means that the culture and the value system born of that situation is itself class conditioned and will carry the marks of domination and oppression. But it will also bear the marks of resistance. In other words in a world of oppressor nations and classes on one hand, and oppressed nations and classes, the literature and culture emergent will reflect the intense struggle between nations and classes.

Inherent in that situation are two types of values or outlooks: that which is on the side of domination and repression and on the side of resistance. Now any literature emerging from that situation will be expressing and reflecting an outlook which is closer either to the oppressing nation and class, or to the struggling nation and class. So in that sense, no literature and no writer can escape from taking a position in the social struggles of our times. A writer can of course claim that he or she is not taking sides, but it has surely to do with what leaves his pen, no matter his own conscious knowledge of his intentions.

Class Struggle

Secondly, a writer himself, as a human being, is living in a class society and whether he likes it or not, he is himself conditioned by the position he or she occupies in that society. His own outlook is already affected by his class upbringing and his conscious or unconscious class sympathies and habits. Once again the literature he or she produces will be affected by his class conditioned habits of thought and practice and therefore takes one or the other side in the social struggle between classes and nations or, in our world today, in the world-wide struggle against imperialism. Literature becomes an even better weapon of struggle when a writer is aware or conscious of the struggling ideologies in the world.

Literature is indeed a powerful weapon. I believe that we in Africa or anywhere else for that matter have to use literature deliberately and consciously as a weapon of struggle in two ways:

a) First by trying as much as possible to correctly reflect the world of struggle in all its stark reality and

b) secondly by weighting our sympathies on the side of those forces struggling against national and class oppression and exploitation, say against the entire system of imperialism in the world today. I believe that the more conscious a writer is about the social forces at work in his society and in the world, the more effective he or she is likely to be as a writer. We writers must reject the bourgeois image of a writer as a mindless genius.

MELI: We are discussing the question of the social responsibility of the writer. Comrade Ngugi, do you see a change in the social responsibility of a Kenyan writer from the colonial period to the period after independence? You were arrested in the period after independence. What is the new element in the post-independence period? Also what makes a writer famous? Is it the way he uses the language or the way he expresses the feelings of the people? What is social or international recognition?

NGUGI: The nature of struggle against imperialism is changing all the time even as imperialism changes its form and particularities in time and place. The writer must be aware of the changing circumstances and act accordingly. In the fifties and earlier, Kenyan people were struggling against the colonial phase of imperialism. During that period, the writer on the whole was in harmony with the anti-imperialist thrust of the people's struggle. It was clear who was the enemy. The racism of the settler coloniser ensured this clarity. The colour of the skin marked the boundary between the coloniser and the colonised. Even the collaborating loyalist Africans — the Buthelezis of colonial Kenya — felt the racism. The oral artist was at the forefront; in articulating the anti-colonial sentiments of the Kenyan people. When adapted to the needs of the struggle, the songs and poetry of the oral tradition of the peasantry became a very powerful means of rallying the people together against colonialism.

The Leopard's Spots

With independence in 1963, imperialism in Kenya merely changed its clothes. It now took the form of a neo-colonial arrangement. Today in Kenya the major banking and financial institutions are owned by the western monopolies. Most of the industries and big commerce are owned by US and western based transnationals. So you find that Kenya's economy — finance, industry, commerce, agriculture — is an extension of Western imperialism. But the visible ruling class is not the international bourgeoisie. It is Kenyan. It is visibly African. But it is a comprador native bourgeoisie controlling the machinery of the state on behalf of imperialism. And like its colonial settler counterpart, this overseer class has become very repressive.

There is nothing uniform about the writer in neo-colonial Kenya. There are now writers and artists who are on the side of the state machinery of neo-colonial repression. But there are others — and fortunately the majority — who are trying to articulate the cry of the people. The responsibility of the progressive writer in a neo-colonial state is made difficult by the fact that the clarity of who is foe and who friend is blurred by the uniformity of colour between the ruler and the ruled. But for such a writer to be effective, he/she has to be even more conscious of the balance of class forces in the national and international scene.

The Beauty of Struggle

As for the question of fame . . . I believe absolutely and unashamedly so in the capacity of the alliance of the Kenyan peasantry and working class to struggle for and actually create a new Kenya. They took on British colonialism and forced it to retreat. As a writer I have always tried to articulate the position of that alliance as effectively as I could within my limits as an artist. Progressive writers must pay special attention to form. If I believe in something I want to put it across as persuasively as I can. I believe that power and beauty and courage and heroism and real humanity are on the side of those who struggle to change all the social forces that deform humanity. Part of the responsibility of a progressive artist is to find the appropriate language with which to express the feelings of the people. A writer should not write with a view to fame or to international recognition.

LANGA: My question deals with some problems writers encounter when dealing with concepts like anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, even anti-apartheid, where you find a person sometimes does not know when to stop when it comes to polemics. A poem can be full of slogans against imperialism, against apartheid, but completely devoid of any literary merit. How do you avoid this? The other thing is that writing and maybe most fields of cultural activity, as Yuri Babash said, are very heavily into the realm of ideas and the world right now is divided along the lines of progressive and reactionary ideas. How do you marry these two extremely important tensions?

SEROTE: I will try to share some experiences with you. I have lived in three countries so far and wherever I was, I tried to interact with the cultural workers of those countries. The first was South Africa. When I left South Africa in 1974 a movement was developing that was dominated by black consciousness. We were together with Mandla Langa at that time in this movement. The political commitment that informed our writing at that point is frozen in the slogan 'Black man you are on your own'. We were writing for black people and we were saying it is very important that black people talk among themselves about how they are going to liberate themselves.

You must bear in mind that the ANC at that time was operating purely underground, there was no mass movement as we know it now. It was very important for the oppressed in South Africa to have a way of expressing their aspirations to become a free people. Black consciousness at that time was saying to the black people that they must find a way, although undefined, of doing this. In that sense I think black consciousness was positive and the cultural workers who participated in black consciousness were also positive.

The most serious and dangerous weakness was that we were ignoring history and the struggle of our people in the past. If we had known more about our history, we in the black consciousness movement would have understood that we were not the pioneers we thought we were. Nevertheless the black consciousness movement contributed to the political consciousness of the oppressed people and indicated to them that they must find a way out of being oppressed.

I left South Africa at a point when the black consciousness movement had already, it was obvious, reached its height and in fact was beginning to retrogress. The leadership of the black consciousness movement were either banned or in prison or in exile. The years after 1976 made the rank and file as well as the leadership better acquainted with the history of struggle in South Africa, and the result was that the majority of the people who had been active in the black consciousness movement began to move towards the African National Congress.

The United States

Then I moved to the United States, where I lived for three years. My leaving South Africa coincided with a series of events reflecting the direction of politics internationally and at home. In South Africa the regime, through its security police, had decided to finish off the black consciousness movement, and by the time I reached London in October 1974 en route to the US, most of the leaders, some of whom were my close friends, had been detained, to appear a year later as the SASO 13. The victory of Frelimo through armed struggle over Portuguese colonialism was, to the South African masses, a great promise for the future. Then there were Guine Bissau and Angola and the defeat of American imperialism in Vietnam. So my mind, on entering the US, was a tapestry of dreams and nightmares.

I had followed the Afro-American struggle through the Black Panther books and publications and through literature, films, photographs and paintings, so I had no illusions about the American dream. At the same time I do differentiate between the American people who have and do uphold the true ideals of democracy which some founding fathers enshrined on the wall for the brave to fight for. Participating in some creativity with both black and white American cultural workers was, I expected, the moment when I would fathom the true American dream. It was after I had been up and down the US, reading poetry, participating in cultural conferences, rallies and demonstrations, that I heard Angela Davis speak at a book launch by a young black writer who was killed by the police by mistake in Harlem.

There had been few, very few moments when I heard confidence expressed about the wish of the people to be free. Many times I had heard guilt, cynicism, despair and doom expressed. Many times blacks told me I was mad to come to the US. And I saw and heard that their hopes were pinned on being one day united spiritually and physically with the motherland, Africa. I myself knew very little about Africa. In retrospect I realise I may have shared the same fantasy about Africa. I wrote *Behold Mama, Flowers* out of my US experiences, dreams and battle.

Back to Africa

Then I met Africa. The 1976 New York demonstration against the killing of students and young people in South Africa on June 16 that year told me something. I had worked hard to mobilise, organising for a maximum participation in this demonstration. It became obvious that many people were outraged by these apartheid killings and hundreds and hundreds of people turned out, poured into the Harlem streets and the Manhattan streets, marching to the South African Consulate, there was no doubt that human beings had been outraged.

I listened before the march as the stewards reported how the police, on granting permission for the march, gave strict orders about how the march was to be conducted and which route it must follow. To me it did not make sense. To other people it did. That told me I could not fight the American police. I was then already packing my bags. By 1977 I was in Gaborone, Botswana.

I met many young Batswana writers and playwrights, like Barry Seboni, Cedric Thobega, Andrew Sesinyi, Sebotso Molefe. Also Bessie Head and Beauty were there. All of us watched with one eye the Zimbabwean struggle unfold, as Bessie would say, "at great human cost". We discussed whether there was anything to write about in Botswana and also whether South Africa would ever be a free country for blacks. These discussions were endless and I suspect they still continue.

Eventually we emerged with a cultural group called Medu Art Ensemble. The group consisted of Batswana, South Africans and European and American expatriates living in that country. The high point of the group was when it spearheaded a festival and conference of South African Arts under the theme "Culture and Resistance". On the one hand it is a great pity that, for whatever reason, extremely few Batswana participated in the creativity and in the discussions. On the other hand, hundreds of South Africans — Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites — came and for seven days we went through the concept of "culture being part and parcel of the struggle for a united democratic and non-racial South Africa." We went through each art form, searching its meaning, understanding how other people have used it and plotting how we intended to use it. "Culture and Resistance" was a turning point in the history of the South African cultural movement. On the one hand it was a confirmation of the creation of this movement. On the other hand it was a beginning of an era for the arts which would seek to become a weapon for freedom in the hands of the oppressed.

CHAIRMAN: What do you say about the writer who identifies with the revolutionary process, expresses all the right ideas, but does not produce good literature?

NGUGI: That's why I said earlier that, if I believe in something, I want to put it across as persuasively and as effectively as I can. And so for me the question of form and artistic effectiveness is part of that correct political tendency. Now, what would be ruinous artistically would be for a writer to take rhetoric and not the concrete experience as his starting point. Rhetoric abstracted from the concrete experience is the surest way to bad art. Of course not all the writers are gifted in the same way. By that I mean there are some people who are obviously more effective with words than others in the same way that some people can sing more effectively than others irrespective of the content of their songs. I believe though that the more one is really involved in the struggle, the more effective he can be even in the artistic expression. After all, where do ideas come from? In production and all the struggles engendered by that are the springs of new ideas and words. Struggles in industry, in commerce, in the fields, the cry of the factory worker as the police bullet hits him, the sense of triumph as the people overcome — all these are part of that concrete world of struggle and change. I strive to capture the movement of life, the motion of things, the ebb and the flow. I believe writers and artists can guard against abstractionism by actually relating the concrete experiences of their people.

CHAIRMAN: Is it possible to be a good writer and a reactionary?

NGUGI: Not quite. One can be good at handling words but express a world outlook which strengthens the forces of reaction. In literature there are many examples of this. But they are not necessarily good writers or say great artists. Yes, they can use words, they can tell a story with a surprise ending or that keeps the reader as it were hanging from the writer's pen. But in the end the untruth they are trying to express comes to undermine their effectiveness as artists of the drama of the human soul. The writers who impress most as creative artists exhibit a strength even where there are contradictions in their work because they do not gloss over the real contradictions at the heart of our social being. Some tendencies within their work might be backward, but in the main the weight of their sympathies as writers is on the side of human freedom and progress . . .

PAHAD: What do you say about Kipling?

NGUGI: Well, I don't know much about Kipling but I would say that some of his poetry and stories come alive only when, despite his sympathies for imperialism, they capture contradictions in imperialism . . .

Take a writer like Tolstoy. Some tendencies in his outlook are backward-looking but the weight of human sympathy in his novels is on the side of the peasantry. Or a writer with an apparently reactionary outlook like Dostoevsky — the weight of sympathy is on the side of human suffering, the tremendous need to end human suffering.

SEROTE: Generally speaking, we all agree that a good writer is one who contributes to the ideas of doing away with oppression, exploitation, disease, helping to create a livable world. But that does not mean that a racist, for example, cannot be a good writer for racists, if one measures the ability to spin out words and express ideas, even about racism. But good writing should be writing that makes the world a livable place.

NGUGI: An artist has the capacity to reflect the world in which he lives, like a mirror. One can talk of a writer as being good or bad to the extent he or she is able to effectively reflect that world with all its contradictions, irrespective of his conscious ideologies — to reflect a certain reality, say of struggle, with all its contradictions. But the other side of the coin is that in reflecting the world a writer also expresses an attitude towards the world. In the situation of, say, imperialism and anti-imperialist struggle, he is taking an attitude towards one or other of those two forces and his sympathies are on one side or the other. Sometimes there can be contradictions between the social realism of the reflected image on the one hand and the weight and sympathies or the conscious attitudes to what is reflected. There can be apparent discrepancy.

LANGA: What are the criteria we ourselves use in judging whether literature is good or bad? Many of the criteria we use have been thrust upon us by our socialisation and education. Is there any experimentation to produce what one might call a new aesthetic outlook?

NGUGI: There has always been a new aesthetic in the sense that the springs of life are there all the time, but in some situations there is a struggle between the new aesthetic and the old aesthetic. The apartheid system, for example, embodies in it the aesthetic of a dying world, a dead world of smell, a putrefied social system, so that you can only feel disgust at it. As for those who are struggling in South Africa, their struggle contains the germs of the new aesthetic. The new aesthetic and the old aesthetic are actually in struggle and what one really wants to see in works of art is the beauty of resistance, because there is tremendous beauty in resistance.

One sometimes sees in films people completely identifying with a character who is down and who then rises. That moment of rising, from being down, never fails to capture people's imagination when expressed in sculpture, in music, in poetry, in a novel. There has been a tendency sometimes to equate what is human with whatever is negative. All the weaknesses of our situation are universalised as being the human condition. But why should we regard what is a weakness in our present situation as the universal condition of our being? What about the other way around, stressing what is strong in us, what is beautiful, what is positive? Why can't that also be seen as an expression of the universal truth of our being, of our existence? Why should we view the acceptance of defeat as somehow more human than the refusal to accept defeat? For me it is more human to refuse to be oppressed, to refuse to be downtrodden, to rise even when you are down. Brecht once said, I think in one of his poems, that when you are down, when you think you are defeated, that's the moment to fight.

CHAIRMAN: We haven't defined what we mean by a new aesthetic. It seems to me that what we are trying to do is reassert an old aesthetic. We should establish criteria based on human values and not on money. The difference between reactionary art and progressive art is fundamentally the question whether the artist is trying to satisfy the needs of the widest section of people. A reactionary artist is one who looks to ruling class interests or the interests of a restricted group. He may be very gifted but he expresses the aspirations only of a certain limited section. Artistic values should be based on the need for an artist to associate himself with the deepest aspirations of the widest section of the people. This means that we have to make a class analysis, or an analysis based on the struggle for national liberation, as part of the process of evaluating.

NGUGI: In a colonial situation the struggle for national liberation is the basis of the development of a new ethic or aesthetic. The concept that people are creating the new man and woman in ourselves, as it were, contains the new ethic or aesthetic. It is not divorced from the old completely. The new society is being created out of the old, is rising from the struggle against the old. The new ethic is constructed from the historical process. The people are creating in struggle, they are raising the progressive aesthetic and ethic to an even higher level, even as they themselves as human beings are rising to new levels of awareness as human beings.

SEROTE: It is very important for us to note that at present in South Africa the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has decided that culture is going to become part and parcel of resistance and is creating structures within COSATU which are going to deal specifically with culture. This is a very positive development in the unfolding cultural movement in South Africa because the workers are going to become active participants in the various cultural manifestations. The aspirations for defeating exploitation and oppression will be expressed by the majority of the people as represented by the workers, who experience the rawest oppression and exploitation on a daily basis. The workers are going to use culture not only as a means of resistance but also as a means of defining the new South Africa.

CHAIRMAN: One of the remaining subjects on our agenda is the question of language.

NGUGI: The question of language in African literature must be seen in an historical context. We must take the languages of the peasantry and the working class in Africa as a starting point. African languages are used by the majority of the nationalities on the continent and the languages of the people should be our starting point.

I see it as a limitation that we do not engage the people in the very languages they speak and use. That's why for me, after working with peasant workers in Kamiriithu, in Limuru, in 1977, in languages they could understand and therefore developing a new type of theatre with a new type of resonance, which was reflecting their condition as workers, I think I could not go back. Once my eyes were open, there was no way I could go back to the old situation where I had become a prisoner of the English language. I feel liberated because I can write in my languages; my novels can be read by workers who understand that language. That work can be translated into any other African language if necessary, into English, Russian, German, Japanese and be made available to any other people in the world.

So I feel free, liberated and for the first time I feel that as a writer I have got my audience, my relationship to my class audience is somehow complete.

A Price to Pay

Of course there are consequences for this. I had two examples recently. As you know in 1977/78 I was put into political detention, precisely because of engaging in progressive democratic theatre in a language the people could understand and therefore engaging in debate about issues of liberation and developing concepts by which people could understand a situation and fight it out. After my release I stayed in Kenya for some time but was banned from getting jobs anywhere in Kenya and eventually was forced into exile. I have been living in exile here in Britain for the last five years.

Ironically living in exile in Britain has made me even more deeply sensitive to the issue of language and that's why very recently I wrote a book called *Decolonising the Mind* which discusses the whole issue of language in African literature. The problem of being in exile is that one is away from the material basis of one's imagination. You need to be in that bus, to hear that phrase being used by a people quarrelling or laughing or whatever. You need to be near a factory to hear those little things which set the imagination flying. Those images that one encounters when one is walking about, those gestures, that laughter — you miss all that when you live in exile. Using a certain language, you miss a situation in which you are interacting with new development in that language, and so on.

Anyway, when I was in exile here I wrote another novel in Kikuyu language called *Matigari Ma Njiruungi.* It is difficult to translate the title into English. It means something like those who survived the bullets, it means the patriots who survived the liberation struggle but in a sense also those who are continuing that struggle; it combines all those things. I wrote it in 1983 but it was published in October 1986 in Kikuyu language. In February 1987 there was a government-initiated operation against Matigari! On that day in February the special branch, that is the political police in Kenya, went to all the bookshops and seized all the copies. They also went to the publisher with a lorry and collected all the books which were in the warehouse.

So the novel written in Kikuyu language in exile in Britain cannot now sell in Kenya. Yet my novels in the English language are selling, they are on display there. So I feel the question of language has become very important for me.

I also learn a lesson from our adversaries, who are sensitive to the importance of polemicising in the language that people speak. The Bible will be available translated even in the tiniest African language. You find that people, in searching for concepts by which to understand or explain their world, often go to the Bible as the only literature that's often available to them in those languages. We are really being deprived of the weapon of ideology with which to fight out the neo-colonial situation. We are continually being dominated by French, English and Portuguese.

SEROTE: As comrade Ngugi says, the question of language is important because, as with the objectives of liberation, the question of language is finally how we express our condition. The day our people are able to express our objective of being alive, which is to be happy, the day all of us can express that, you will also see that our laughter will have a different ring from the time when we cannot express the condition of happiness.

It is very important to promote languages because in so doing we are promoting the energy of the people. Promoting language within the context of the unfolding liberation struggle is also a promotion of the energy which must change the world.

Ngugi says the security police in Kenya were sent out to search for his book. I am just thinking, what is going to happen in South Africa the day Afrikaans and English are moulded into a toi-toi, when whites who speak Afrikaans and English move into toi-toi and express the condition of their lives, their aspiration to become totally part of the struggle? Because this is what toi-toi is about. When in those universities, in those suburbs we suddenly hear toi-toi in English, toi-toi in Afrikaans, in the mielie fields, in the platteland, then South Africa will be a very different place.

Divide and Rule

The question of language is a very emotive issue which relates to the consciousness of the people. It's very important for people to be able to say what they want, not feel that what they want is dictated to them or imposed on them. Yet while it is important for us to promote the different languages, we should also understand that the question of language has been used to divide people. In South Africa, people who come from the Northern Transvaal, the Vendas, when they come into Johannesburg they hide the fact that they are Vendas, they don't speak in Venda. People who come from the same area, the Tsonga, when they come into areas like Johannesburg, hide this fact. We should find a way of promoting Venda and Tsonga so that people in those areas can speak in their language and express their condition of life. But I am suggesting that we also have to find a language that is international to everybody.

MELI: A word on the cultural boycott.

SEROTE: We must support the cultural boycott because this is a weapon of the oppressed which they have acquired to state their condition of oppression to the world and ensure that the world isolates apartheid culture. Yet we do have a problem which we must deal with. Ngugi's books *Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood* have been widely read at home. It would be a very serious contradiction if we were to apply the cultural boycott to those two books because they have contributed to our understanding of and participation in the struggle, especially the young people.

NGUGI: Yes, as a Kenyan who actively supports the South African struggle and who believes and has written that the liberation of South Africa is the key to the liberation of the continent, I would like to support and be guided by whatever policies are defined by those who are in the struggle in South Africa. But I do see the possible contradictions that Wally is talking about. We must find a way to isolate apartheid culture and all the cultural forces that strengthen the apartheid system, while at the same time we strengthen the culture of those who are in the struggle.

I can see this contradiction, the need on the one hand to isolate all the cultural forces that strengthen apartheid, and at the same time have international solidarity with the culture of those who are struggling. It is important in another way also, for us, because the literature of the South African people has meant a lot to those out of South Africa.

THE FORCES OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

By Nyawuza

"We are fighting for the interests of the West in Angola." — Jonas Savimbi.

Savimbi was perfectly correct. What he omitted to say was that they, members of UNITA, as stooges, surrogates and mercenaries, lose their African identity in the process and become people's enemies and a total negation of what Africa stands for. Savimbi "forgot" to tell us about the amount of suffering and hunger this "fighting for the interests of the West" causes the ordinary Angolan.

It was comrade Jose Eduardo dos Santos, the President of Angola, who summarised what this "fighting for the interests of the West in Angola" means. He has said on more than one occasion that racist South Africa's aggression against Angola has already resulted in material damage amounting to more than $12 billion, an incalculable number of dead, about 50,000 disabled and more than 600,000 displaced people. The statistics are startling but, as *Sechaba* commented, the spiritual damage — the suffering, pain and hunger — cannot be given in figures.[1]

Angola is potentially one of the richest countries in the Southern African region, with vast mineral and oil reserves. Before the independence of Angola, the Benguela Railway line was the main outlet for copper and other minerals from Zambia and the Shaba province of Zaire.

The role of the United States in Zaire (then called Congo) in the 1960's is well-known. The US used all its might to make the Congo its ally in the region, that is, in addition to Portugal. In the 1970's new developments emerged. After the fall of fascism in Portugal racist South Africa became the main ally and the battering ram of the United States.

This becomes explicable when one considers that the MPLA — formed in 1956 from the fusion of several anti-colonial organisations — started armed struggle in February, 1961. This was followed by the first stirrings of counter-revolution. In October of the same year the people's struggle was turned into a fratricidal war fomented by the leadership of the Union of the People of Angola — UPA — (formerly the Union of the People of Northern Angola) whose chief was Holden Roberto. The UPA (later to be renamed National Front for the Liberation of Angola — FNLA) was based in Kinshasa, capital of Zaire. Using "blind tribalism", which took religious, linguistic, ethnic and ideological forms, UPA barbarously massacred 8,000 Angolan patriots, MPLA cadres who had committed no crime other than to fight to liberate themselves and their country.

Links with CIA

Who is Holden Roberto? As far back as 1959, Roberto worked at the Guinean mission to the UN in New York and it is believed that this was the beginning of his CIA links. In April, 1962 FNLA formed what is called the Government of the Angolan Republic in Exile (GRAE) whose aim was to terrorise the MPLA with the assistance of the local Zairean gendarmerie. At the same time the CIA started to send arms and funds to Roberto, who had by then refused Algerian volunteers, but was ready to accept the services of the American officer Bernard Meinherz, a "Vietnam veteran" who directed the FNLA's military wing.

FNLA used to call on the people to kill "all whites, all people of mixed parentage, all bearers of identity cards, so-called assimilados or educated Angolans, and all Umbundu migrant workers from Central Angola employed as slave labour on the coffee estates."[2] Empty and unfulfilled promises were made — that 25,000 armed UPA men were coming, in addition to American forces. The mention of American forces is not accidental and says a lot.

What was the position in Savimbi's UNITA? Marga Holness calls Savimbi a "chameleon in Angolan politics."[3] What does this mean? Jonas Savimbi is an assimilado from the Bié province. In 1962, the year after the start of the armed struggle, he was in Lausanne, Switzerland, studying political science

— after dropping out of the medical school in Portugal. He joined the MPLA. He later met Tom Mboya, the Kenyan politician who was notorious for his strong American connections, at a conference at Makerere University in Uganda. Mboya advised Savimbi to leave the MPLA for FNLA. Then followed a US State Department official carrying a cheque book. This convinced Savimbi of the correctness of Mboya's advice. Soon thereafter he became "Foreign Minister" in GRAE which was then led by characters associated with the royal family of the old Kongo Kingdom.

However, things were soon to change. In July 1964, at the All-African meeting of the Heads of State in Cairo, Savimbi resigned from FNLA. He accused Roberto of "tribalism" and of having been a "United States creation" since 1961. Denouncing the US advisers working with the FNLA and its army's lack of activity, Savimbi decided to rejoin the MPLA. He went to Brazzaville to meet Dr Agostinho Neto and other leaders of MPLA. He had preconditions for rejoining. He wanted to be vice-president with responsibility for foreign affairs. This was the height of arrogance. The impatient Savimbi returned to Europe and nothing was heard of him till 1966 when it was reported in Switzerland that something called Amangola, Manifesto of the Friends of Angola, had come into existence.

Factionalism and Dissent

In 1966 Savimbi formed UNITA. From the outset it became obvious that UNITA's target was not Portuguese colonialism but MPLA. Not only that. UNITA's "military activity" also had the aim of causing friction between the Zambian government and the MPLA which had assured Zambia that it would not interfere with the Benguela Railway. This railway transported goods to and from landlocked Zambia which at that time was virtually surrounded by minority regimes.

Savimbi is a man full of tricks. On May 5, 1972 the Tanzanian newspaper, *The Standard*, announced that UNITA had donated 2,000 kilograms of maize to Zambia to help that country overcome shortages caused by the blockade of Zambian goods in the port of Beira! This maize was supposed to be a surplus from UNITA's "cooperative farms". This was at a time when Angolans were starving in MPLA's liberated zones and UNITA, since it was not fighting the Portuguese colonialists, could not have had any "cooperative farms" to speak of.

The true role of UNITA became evident after the April 1974 coup d'état in Portugal when officers of the Movement of the Armed Forces (MFA) opened the secret files of the former fascist regime. In them was correspondence between Savimbi and high-ranking Portuguese military concerning plans and promises on how to liquidate the MPLA. To achieve this Savimbi needed more assistance in the form of arms and ammunition.

This correspondence revealed UNITA had been collaborating with PIDE, the Portuguese Security Police, and "it appeared that the then PIDE director in Angola, Anibal de Sao José Lopes, had contacts with Savimbi since before 1969, although it was not known if they ever met."[4] Besides the Savimbi/Roberto factor in Angolan politics, there was also the NATO/Portugal connection. The western powers, through NATO, were arming Portugal to the teeth and on the southern flank racist South Africa had been involved since 1969, if not earlier.

Problems that faced the MPLA

The MPLA had many problems in the region — problems which were caused by the US intervention in the internal affairs of the Congo. In October, 1961 MPLA established an office in Kinshasa, but a year later, in November 1962, MPLA offices were closed down and the MPLA was expelled from Zaire. Angola was surrounded by Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia was then called), South West Africa (Namibia), Congo (Zaire) and Congo Brazzaville which was then far from being progressive. There were imperialist manoeuvres in the region.

In Cabinda, the oil rich Angolan enclave cut off from the rest of Angola by a strip of Zairean territory, there emerged a separatist group called the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC). While FNLA and CIA operated in the north of Angola, racist South Africa and UNITA were attacking from the south and east. This was all prior to the independence of Angola in 1975 — an independence which was fought for by MPLA alone.

There were other problems:

> "A multitude of political groups had sprung up overnight in Angola, mainly among white settlers who were massacring the people in the urban shantytowns. There were also people advocating the killing of whites or of members of other tribes."[5]

There were also mercenaries of various nationalities, organised groups of Portuguese fascists who called themselves the Portuguese Liberation Army, as well as many splinter groups including the Chipenda faction.

Political Bankruptcy

A revolutionary situation releases all sorts of forces and it is in that situation that a revolutionary organisation, tested in battle, gives a lead and shows the direction. This is what the MPLA did.

But it is also exactly in that situation that the reactionary and opportunistic forces show their true colours. Small in size and with little political influence and following, both FNLA and UNITA sought to impose themselves on the people by force. Their political bankruptcy, ideological confusion, tribalism and anti-white rhetoric proved to be nothing else but downright reformism. Their daily pronouncements showed a deep-rooted pessimism that the Angolan people were not ready for independence. The Angolan people should be prepared for the "democratic game", they said, and there was a need for a "period of educating the people."

Surely this was a tactic to delay Angolan independence! But in actual fact the problem was broader than that. In one of his unguarded moments Savimbi let the cat out of the bag when he said:

> "I hope the future leaders of Angola will cooperate with South Africa . . . South Africa is an independent country. All the African states agree on that. I have never heard anyone talk in terms of liberating South Africa — not even at the OAU. We are condemning apartheid — that is a different thing."[6]

One wonders what that "we" stands for. This becomes even more mystifying when the question of liberating South Africa is counterposed to condemning apartheid.

Pretoria and Washington Declare War on MPLA

The apartheid strategists wanted to keep this a "secret war", but the Angolan government exposed this "secrecy" when in December 1975 it announced the capture of 4 SADF soldiers 750 kilometres north of the Namibian border. John Stockwell in his book has described the CIA-BOSS cooperation.[7] This cooperation has since then developed and deepened.

There is a lot of talk that the SADF is in Angola because of the presence of Cuban forces. But the truth of the matter is that the Cuban internationalist forces arrived in Angola only in October, 1975 and these were only 480 instructors who came to help large numbers of Angolans joining the MPLA military wing, FAPLA. By that time the apartheid forces, with armoured vehicles and heavy artillery, had already taken the towns of Lubango and Mocamedes (now Namibie) and had started to advance towards Lobito and Benguela. The Washington-Pretoria military and political involvement in support of the FNLA/UNITA had nothing to do with the Cuban/Soviet presence in Angola.

It was only in November, 1975 that the first Cuban combat troops were sent to Angola. The Soviet Union supplied FAPLA with arms and ammunition and the rest of the socialist world also assisted. The SADF was forced to withdraw. In their retreat they blew up bridges, plundered vehicles, machinery, livestock, raped and looted, transporting their booty into Namibia.

The military assault having failed, the racists and imperialists felt it necessary to resort to economic pressure. The US government put pressure on Gulf Oil to pull out of the oil-rich Cabinda enclave. The two Boeing 737's which Angola bought from the US were not delivered and the money was not returned. Instead the US sent the following message:

> "The MPLA would do well to heed our advice that no government can plan the reconstruction in post-war Angola without United States and Western help. No government can obtain the technical and financial resources to stimulate economic development without American consent ... As the MPLA is aware, access to sophisticated technology is a privilege."[8]

This needs no comment except to say that all-round aggression against Angola continued taking various forms, including the "linkage" question which virtually subordinated the independence of Namibia to American and apartheid interests. This is besides the fact that the Cuban forces and the Soviet experts were invited by an independent government of Angola; the same cannot be said about the racist forces occupying parts of Angola.

The MNR in Mozambique

The emergence of counter-revolution in Mozambique is closely connected with the struggle for independence in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) — since 1983 the press has called it Renamo and the Mozambican government has called it bandidos armados (armed bandits) — was set up immediately after the liberation of Mozambique in 1976.

MNR was started by the Rhodesian Security CIO under the Rhodesian Ministry of Information and was run by the Directorate of Psychological Warfare until March 1980. Up to March 1980 its activities were mainly propagandistic, using Voz da Africa Livre (Voice of Free Africa) which was opened near Gwelo (now Gweru) on July 5, 1976 to beam into Mozambique. Its first leader was André Matade Matsangaiza, a former prisoner of FRELIMO convicted for theft of a Mercedes car and items from the quartermaster's stores.

In 1978 the MNR, with the help of Rhodesians, set up a base inside Mozambique on the Gorongosa mountain 100 kilometres north-west of Beira. Here they trained and conducted operations. Matsangaiza was killed in battle and was succeeded by Dhlakama.

Mozambique, which had been a victim of unending attacks, closed its borders with Rhodesia on March 3, 1976 thus depriving itself of one-third of its foreign currency. In 1980 Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. This meant that during or prior to the Lancaster House negotiations MNR had to be transferred from Rhodesia to South Africa with the assistance of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the knowledge of the British who had taken over the administration in Rhodesia.

By 1981 the SADF had concluded training the MNR recruits evacuated from Rhodesia to South Africa in March 1980. They were now preparing for entry into Mozambique to overthrow Machel by 1985. Malawi was to act as a rear base. But they had not bargained for the assistance Mozambique was to receive from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA).

There were also illusions within FRELIMO, as Machel later explained:

> "After independence, when we took off our guns and exchanged our uniforms for suits and ties, we made a mistake. We looked elegant, but the bourgeoisie had the guns."[9]

These were difficult years in international politics. After the election of Reagan in late 1980 on an anti-communist ticket the Pretoria racists were reassured. Reagan's rhetoric about the need to fight what he called "inter-national terrorism" and his statement that "South Africa is an ally of Western interests in Africa" left the South African racists in no doubt as to the meaning of "constructive engagement". Chester Crocker, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, intensified his shuttle diplomacy in Southern Africa. There was more shuttle diplomacy between Maputo and Pretoria.

The Nkomati Accord

All this resulted in the well-known "Agreement on Non-Aggression and Good Neighbourliness" — the Nkomati Accord — which was signed by P.W. Botha and Samora Machel. The ANC, which was not approached or briefed at any stage, took exception to the Nkomati Accord and made its views known to the world.[10]

The problem that faced Mozambique, viewed from the point of view of the majority of the leadership of FRELIMO, was whether to "commit suicide" or, as President Tambo put it, "to hug the hyena". They opted for the latter. Were these really the only two options?

The irony of the whole drama was that the new Mozambican state was dependent on apartheid South Africa. The MNR would sabotage the refineries and the Mozambique government would call on racist South African fire fighters to extinguish the blaze. The scale of atrocities committed by the MNR became massive and extensive: cutting of ears, noses or lips and hacking people to death with pick-axes, maiming, mutilating, amputating and raping civilians.

It is not Mozambicans alone who were the victims. The reaction attacked personnel helping to reconstruct Mozambique. It is calculated that from 1981 to March 1986 at least 34 cooperantes (foreign contracted workers including priests and nuns) were murdered, 66 kidnapped and 5 wounded by the MNR. Among the victims were nationals of Brazil, Britain, Bulgaria, China, France, German Democratic Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Soviet Union, Sri Lanka and Sweden. The aim was to frighten foreign aid workers and thus cripple the development projects of Mozambique. The ANC was another target, primarily from the SADF.

The sum total of all this was more and more South African interference in the internal affairs of some Southern African states, the evacuation of the ANC in parts of the region, culminating in the killing of Samora Machel.

The Real Threat

The real threat to apartheid is the alternative new social order with all its political and ideological implications which Angola and Mozambique are attempting to build. As far as the racists are concerned, this has to be destroyed.

There are two linked strategies in the policy of apartheid:

1. attacks on the ANC, SWAPO and the democratic forces in the two countries.
2. invasion and destabilisation of the frontline states.

The destabilisation of the frontline states is aimed at creating political and economic "chaos" — a condition which will enable UNITA and RENAMO to take over. Pretoria thinks that this formula can be repeated throughout Southern Africa.

To achieve this Pretoria has mounted a massive misinformation package for SADF recruits and foreign journalists. The former are told they are going on a safari to Namibia and the latter are taken to "UNITA-controlled areas", that is, the East and South East Angola which is a vast and under-populated area.

It is interesting to note that some actions of the SADF are attributed to UNITA. In May 1985 Captain Wynand du Toit was captured and two SADF commandos were killed in action while attempting to sabotage a Gulf Oil installation in the Northern Angolan enclave of Cabinda. They came from South Africa carrying UNITA leaflets. Du Toit had been involved in similar activities before, all of which had been attributed to UNITA.

Southern Africa at War

The whole Southern Africa region is in a state of war. Southern Africa will never know peace or stable conditions for development until apartheid is wiped off the earth's face. The real forces which can do this are the ANC and SWAPO.

In Angola and Mozambique there is no "civil war" but a war of aggression by racist South Africa in which, besides troops and mercenary units, armed bands of Angolans and Mozambicans are also used under a political label borrowed from the past. In Africa — perhaps in the whole world — revolution has always been accompanied by counter-revolution.

Angola and Mozambique are facing an economic and financial crisis common to almost all countries of the African continent, but aggravated in these cases by racist South Africa's permanent destabilising and aggressive activity. The war consumes energies and resources.

The current apartheid invasion of Angola, the aim of which is to save UNITA from total defeat in Kuando Hubango, lasted for two months and in that fierce fighting racist South Africa lost 200 men, more than 30 planes and large amounts of war material. The racists replied by deploying the Eighth Armoured Division, massing more than 30,000 men in Northern Namibia as well as more than 400 artillery pieces, 500 tanks and more than 80 fighter planes. This was at a time when we were told Savimbi and his UNITA were scoring victories.

Botha — not for the first time — crossed illegally the legitimate border of the sovereign state of Angola to visit UNITA's "headquarters." He thus put himself in the position of an outlaw — an act of aggression committed by a so-called head of state of the aggressor nation.

Botha is not the slightest bit interested in any peaceful solution of conflict in the region but, on the contrary, is even prepared to step up his attacks on Angola and the other frontline states "whenever necessary using the puppets who crawl in the wake of their military vehicles and in the shadow of their aircraft."[11]

Faced with the first reaction of the white community in South Africa itself, which is apparently now becoming aware of the true scale of their government's aggression against Angola, the racist authorities are trying to cover up the habitual inconsistencies in their propaganda by creating even more inconsistencies at what is becoming a frenzied rate, says Angop.[12]

The emergence of UNITA in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique is not only closely related to, but is a result of, Portuguese colonialism and the settler politics and policies of the Smith regime. The fall of Portuguese colonialism and the Smith regime in Rhodesia meant that Pretoria had to take over. This influenced the composition, size, level of training, financing and deployment of UNITA and MNR counter-revolutionaries. This is closely connected with the question of apartheid colonisation of Namibia and the misuse of Namibia as a launching pad against Angola. This is a triple crime against the people of Namibia.

UNITA and MNR cannot exist without apartheid. In fact they are an extension of apartheid — a wing of the South African Defence Force. They will disappear with the destruction of apartheid. Apartheid nurtures and abets counter-revolution in Southern Africa.

UNITA and MNR represent the most ideologically and politically backward elements in the African society. The leadership of these "movements" represents the aspirations of a nascent comprador bourgeoisie which serves the interests of imperialism. Some of them are simply criminals. They are subservient to international imperialism. Not only that. They are one of the pillars of apartheid whose task is to destroy progressive developments outside the borders of South Africa while apartheid "takes care" of the internal situation. They are more than a threat to peace in the region and certainly a cause of international tension. They drive away aid and assistance to the frontline states and therefore aim at perpetuating the under-development of those countries.

It is therefore logical that these "movements" will disappear with the destruction of apartheid. Therefore assistance to the ANC and SWAPO is part of the struggle against MNR and UNITA.

Footnotes

1. *Sechaba,* October, 1986.
2. Martin, D. and Johnson, P. editors *Destructive Engagement — Southern Africa at War.* Harare, 1987, p.74.
3. Ibid. p.76.
4. Ibid. p.357.
5. Ibid. p.82.
6. *Financial Mail,* May 9, 1975.
7. Stockwell, J. *In Search of Enemies.* New York, 1978.
8. Martin, D. and Johnson, P. op.cit., p.91.
9. Ibid. p.21.
10. *Sechaba,* May 1984.
11. Angop — The National News Agency of Angola, London. 30.11.1987.
12. Ibid.

THEORY AND PRACTICE — Part 1

MARXISM, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COLONIAL QUESTION

By Ben Molapo

In the last few years there has been a lively debate about the most appropriate, general characterisation of oppression in South Africa. The intensity of this debate reflects the rising tide of struggle in our country, and the great importance for that struggle of correct, accurate theory. Some of this debate has concerned itself with the concept 'colonialism of a special type' (CST).[1] This general concept, which occupies a central place within our 1962 Party programme *The Road to South African Freedom*, has been attacked from two different quarters.

From the right the Reagans and Thatchers constantly seek to obscure the colonial aspect of South African oppression. They insist that the South African regime, "however repugnant it might be", is an independent and legitimate entity "no worse than many other authoritarian regimes". With these arguments they hope to downgrade the status of our struggle, from a fully-fledged anti-colonial struggle to a mere civil rights struggle. From this perspective the apartheid regime itself becomes the main agent for relevant change.

However, it is to the arguments against the concept 'colonialism of a special type' (CST) coming from the left that we wish to devote most of our attention. In essence there are three main points of criticism raised against the CST approach from the left:

1. There is a suggestion that the concept of CST is not really anchored within historical materialism, that it is, at best, a descriptive term without any scientific basis.
2. It is argued that by applying the concept of CST we are obscuring the relatively advanced capitalist character of our society. As a result we are also obscuring the necessarily leading role of the working class in our struggle.
3. The concept of CST is outmoded, or 'faded' (as one critical article puts it); it fails to take into account many significant social and economic changes in South Africa. In particular, these critics argue, this approach leads us into speaking of a broad people's camp of all oppressed classes and strata. This, they argue, ignores the significant emergence of class differences amongst blacks, and in particular the emergence of a black bourgeoisie.[2]

In this article (which is divided into two separate papers) we will confront the challenge of these criticisms. The first instalment will relate the concept of CST to the general body of Marxist-Leninist theory. Far from being a descriptive, or 'Nationalist' deviation, the concept of CST *is* the concrete application of a Marxist-Leninist class analysis to our specific South African situation.

In the second instalment we will show that the CST approach is more relevant than ever before. Apart from dealing with the secondary question of an emergent black bourgeoisie, we will also consider how the CST approach illuminates the significance of the main forms of struggle in the last few years (boycotts, rudimentary organs of people's power, the question of insurrection, the township as mass revolutionary base). Amongst other things, we will show how the CST approach underlines more firmly than any other the crucially important strategic role of the leading class in our struggle — the proletariat.

Colonialism of a Special Type — a Revolutionary Concept Rooted in Marxism-Leninism

To understand the particular form of society that has developed in South Africa, we need to ground ourselves in some of the basics of Marxism-Leninism. In the first place, it is important to remind ourselves briefly of the relationship between the capitalist mode of production (CMP) and the nation-state. There is considerable Marxist-Leninist literature on this topic, much of it emerging from concrete struggles.[3] There is no need here to dwell on all the intricacies. Essentially, there is a *tendency* for the capitalist mode of production to build and reproduce itself within societies that have the general features of the nation. In the broadest terms nations are historically evolved communities unified by language, culture, well-defined territory and, above all, a capitalist (or socialist) home market. There are some complex (often politically sterile) debates about where to draw the line — is Canada, for instance, with two major languages really a nation? To approach the question from this side, in a metaphysical way, seeking to qualify or disqualify, pursuing non-existent perfect cases, is to miss the main political point. The real point to note is the absolutely universal *tendency* for the capitalist mode of production to forge fairly large societies, breaking down and incorporating smaller tribal groupings, feudal principalities, localised entities, immigrant populations, stamping on them all, through political and economic power, a degree of cultural, linguistic and territorial unity.

These assimilating features are particularly marked in the early, emergent phase of capitalism in Western Europe and North America. In its late imperialist phase the increasingly crisis ridden capitalist metropolitan countries prolong their existence and maintain their profits through a jingoistic national chauvinism that seeks to rally their assimilated ethnic majorities. At the same time there is super-exploitation and non-assimilation of ghettoised minorities — blacks, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the United States, Algerians in France, Turks in FRG, Koreans in Japan, etc.[4]

Even the assimilation in the early period must not be exaggerated. These are class societies, and class divisions leave a deep imprint on culture and language. Nevertheless, in the period of emergent capitalism, uniform national languages are standardised for the first time and a relatively unified national culture is established — partly through national educational apparatuses. These are universal tendencies in the heartlands of the emergent CMP. But why?

Prior to the historical development of the CMP, production was overwhelmingly for consumption within the immediate production unit itself — the hunter-gatherer band, the tribal clan, the feudal estate. With some notable exceptions (which serve to underline the general rule), production for exchange was marginal, on the peripheries of pre-capitalist production. In earlier forms of production, the overwhelming majority of people were tied down within highly localised production.[5]

In its early phase, the capitalist mode of production was a genuinely revolutionary force, with a world historic significance. For the first time extended, constant, day-to-day exchange on the labour, the raw materials and financial markets assembles the necessary components for production. Likewise, the products that emerge from this process must flow out on to the market in order to realise themselves as commodities.

For the CMP all barriers to the extended development of its productive and exchange processes, all blockages to the uninterrupted flow of commodities, are so many obstacles impeding the fullest realisation of profits. It is here that the secret of the link between the CMP and the nation lies. The bourgeoisie tends to carve out, as a home base for its operations, communities that are large enough to sustain viable economies of scale. It needs also viable home markets that are unified, or come to be unified sufficiently (culturally, language-wise, territorially and politically) to permit the rapid, extended reproduction of the CMP, the free flow of commodities at least, in the first instance, within the bounds of this home market.

The World Economy

This tendency to unification of society is linked to one crucial aspect of the CMP, its *social forces of production.* Compared to all earlier forms of production, the CMP draws millions and millions of people together into a complex, interlinked national, and indeed also world, economic system.

But these social forces of production are only unleashed with one ultimate aim — *the private appropriation of profits.* The CMP, highly socialised as it is, finally rests on class exploitation. To ensure the perpetuation of its private ownership and appropriation the bourgeoisie everywhere must rely on bourgeois dictatorship, class domination. This political domination occurs in various forms, and at various levels. To put the matter very schematically:

1. At the immediate point of production bourgeois class domination is exerted through management and shop-floor supervision, through economic 'necessity' and the wage form, and through the calling in of the police and army 'when required'.
2. At the national level, bourgeois class domination is exerted through a variety of political forms ranging from outright fascist terror through to the more sophisticated varieties of bourgeois liberal democracy. The specific national form of bourgeois domination will vary according to the balance of class forces, the international conjuncture, national political traditions, and a host of other factors. This national domination is not just political and economic, it also involves socio-cultural factors (for instance, the disadvantaging of certain dialects, the school system, the mass media, etc).
3. But the bourgeoisie also, of course, exerts domination at the international

level. Among the more common forms of international bourgeois domination are colonialism, semi-colonialism (as practised by European powers and the US in China before the revolution, or Persia, for instance), and neo-colonialism. We will go on to argue that in South Africa, at the national level, bourgeois domination is exerted over the majority through a form of domination (colonialism) that is normally associated with the international level. To prepare the ground for our later argument, let us here enumerate some of the main political features of 'classical' bourgeois colonialism.

Classical colonialism involves two distinct social formations, with the colonised society directly occupied by the external forces of the colonial power. The colonial power erects its own political apparatus within the colony. In turn this colonial administration transforms and corrupts existing indigenous structures of domination, turning them into its own subordinate instruments (pliant chiefs, collaborative indunas, etc.). The colonised people, in their overwhelming majority, are excluded from the most basic political, language and cultural rights within the central, dominant colonial administration. They are denied the most basic democratic rights of self-determination.

Colonialism also makes wide use of the strategy of divide and rule, it fosters cultural divisions and distinctions, tribalisms and ethnic narrowness among the colonially oppressed. The basic political structural reality of classical colonialism is the simultaneous incorporation or *inclusion* of the colonised people within the international colonial system, and their simultaneous *exclusion* from basic political, economic, cultural and language rights. The fundamental economic reality underlying colonial domination is the super-exploitation of the oppressed peoples by the colonial power.

The Development of the CMP in South Africa

It was the mining revolution beginning in the 1870s that introduced the capitalist mode of production to southern Africa. Before that time, southern Africa was a loose collection of colonial territories, tribal chiefdoms and semi-feudal Boer republics all under the general domination of colonial mercantile capitalism. The introduction of the capitalist mode of production into southern Africa rapidly changed the social and political character of the region. With imperialist capital and an imperial army of occupation, a new bourgeois society, South Africa was forged. This new reality brought millions of formerly independent and semi-independent people within the framework of a single political, territorial and economic structure — South Africa.

South Africa, the country, was at once the result of and the necessary condition for the expanding reproduction of the capitalist mode of production in the region. But in this case, while the social character of the new capitalist forces of production spurred on the breaking down of all social, cultural, economic and political barriers in the building of something approaching a nation, the form of bourgeois domination that developed in South Africa distorted and held back in a particularly exaggerated form these nationally unifying tendencies. In order to ensure its continued domination the bourgeoisie has relied upon political forms that are characteristic of colonial domination, although applied here within the boundaries of a single, relatively advanced capitalist society.

The bourgeoisie of most advanced and relatively advanced capitalist countries disorganises the working class, or at least the ethnic majority within the working class, through appealing to cultural, linguistic and political unity ("We're all part of the same great nation"). But in South Africa the overwhelming majority of workers, along with their fellow blacks, are excluded all down the line — politically, culturally, territorially and economically. In South Africa class domination interacts with and is deepened by colonial domination of the majority of South Africa's inhabitants.

But why did this particular form of domination develop in South Africa? There are several factors, among the most important are:

1. The strength of early, primary resistance by the tribal peoples of southern Africa to colonial dispossession and domination;
2. The peculiarities of industrial mining; and
3. South Africa's imperialist path to capitalist transformation.

Let us consider each of these factors briefly.

The Strength of Early Primary Resistance

Compared to many other societies with similar backgrounds of extensive European colonial settler occupation (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US, many South American countries), the indigenous people of South Africa were not exterminated down to almost the last person. This is not a tribute to the greater humanism of South Africa's European settlers. In fact, they were as ruthless as colonists elsewhere, and they did succeed in their genocidal attacks on the Khoisan peoples who were almost entirely annihilated. But at the beginning of this century the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of what was soon to be South Africa remained African. Their survival was the result of the relative cohesion of their societies and of centuries of heroic armed resistance.

It is true that, by the time of the development of industrial capitalism in southern Africa, the ability of the African tribes to sustain independent armed resistance was fundamentally weakened. The last major tribally based armed resistance of the old kind to colonial domination was to occur in 1906 with the Bambatha rebellion, and it was defeated. Nevertheless, the heroic resistance of South Africa's peoples ensured that millions of our people were not exterminated, that we remained the majority in our ancestral lands.

This centuries-long heroic armed resistance has passed down to us in the epoch of industrial capitalism a distinct cultural identity. We have inherited militant traditions of the greatest significance to our ongoing people's struggle. They are a reservoir of strength and collective example. In fact this passing down has often been direct — among the members of the first major black trade union movement in South Africa, the ICU, were newly proletarianised peasants who, just years before, had fought as warriors in the Bambatha rebellion. It is no accident that MK, our people's army, has chosen the symbol of the cowhide shield and the spear. It is also no accident that the proletarianised urban masses of our country today mount massive industrial strikes, wage insurrectionary street battles, and hold mass rallies while unifying and steeling themselves with war chants and songs, whose words might have been changed, but whose rhythms and forms come directly down to us from the period of armed tribal resistance.

With the beginnings of industrial capitalism in South Africa the reality of this only recently 'pacified', 'foreign' majority within the space of the emergent bourgeois country created specific problems of control and domination.

Home Base

The CMP, as we have already noted, requires a particularly homogeneous, uninterrupted, well-defined space — the national territory — as its home base. The border regions of pre-capitalist societies are often ill-defined, with power concentrated at the centre but gradually petering out on the frontiers. But the bourgeois national territory is a different social reality. It is a tightly defined terrain, the space of a single monetary currency, of a home market, marked out by well controlled frontiers and customs posts. The concentration camp is one extreme way in which bourgeois domination has maintained the social homogeneity of its terrain, by excluding the 'alien', the 'anti-national' in frontiers within the frontiers.

The particular brand of colonial domination that has developed in South Africa has carried this kind of inclusion-exclusion, this erecting of internal frontiers within the space of the bourgeois social formation to unparalleled extremes. Apart from a massive and extensive prison system (South Africa has the highest prisoner to population ratio in the world), the politico-social space of South Africa is unique. It is pock-marked with internal frontiers, fragmentary entities of all kinds, bantustans, compounds, segregated townships, group areas, and even, although less so at present, segregated micro-spaces — trains, park benches, buses, etc. In South Africa the ruling bloc confronts itself with the unique task of treating as foreigners (or at best as colonised, third class citizens) the overwhelming majority of the land.

The various reform proposals — federations, confederal federations, black 'city states', the KwaNatal proposals — are all so many adaptations and variations on the same fundemental colonial incorporation, division and exclusion of the majority. In a sense, all of these convoluted schemes are a backhanded and ongoing tribute to one major factor behind CST — the heroic primary resistance of the African people ensuring their survival as an 'undigested' majority. We are a people whom the South African bourgeoisie, and the wider white ruling bloc of which it is a leading part, have been both unwilling and indeed unable to incorporate into a domination based on a national consensus.

The Peculiarities of Mining

A second major feature that accounts for the particular colonial form of bourgeois domination in our country relates to the character of industrial mining. The cutting edge of the capitalist industrial revolution in South Africa was diamond, and, especially, deep-level gold mining. It was the mining sector that was to remain the dominant capitalist sector for many decades in our country. The new industrial metropolis on the Witwatersrand related to the southern African region in a characteristically colonial manner — extracting raw materials on a vast scale to fuel its own development. But, in this case, the 'raw material' was human labour power plundered from the reserves and surrounding colonial territories. This human labour power was reproduced cheaply (for the mining capitalists, that is) by tribal and peasant societies. This rural hinterland to the mines was simultaneously squeezed (through taxation and confinement) in order to compel it to give up large numbers of males, and allowed to exist (in crisis) in order to play its subsidising role in the reproduction of cheap labour power.

There was another characteristic of mining. This was an industry that produced almost entirely for export. In its first decades of existence, mining did little to develop an internal, home market. It did not depend, for its own extended development, on a large consumer market within South Africa. To be sure, in the course of this century, things have changed. With the growth of manufacturing, now the dominant sector within the South African economy, the capitalist class has sought to develop and extend a home market.

But the South African economy is still profoundly skewed by its peculiar colonial and mining beginnings, and by ongoing CST oppression. To take just one index of this — according to 1987 ESCOM figures some 20 million South Africans live in households without electricity. This figure excludes the six million people of the so-called 'independent' TBVC Bantustans, the overwhelming majority of whom also have no household electricity. So, in one of the world's relatively advanced capitalist countries, with an extensive manufacturing sector that is battling to find a consumer market, we have some 26 million people out of a total population of 35 million without any form of household electricity! Yet household electrification is a major component, in the present period, for developing a consumer market. This figure, then, reveals a highly underdeveloped national market, which is the legacy, in part, of the mining origins of the capitalist revolution in our country. This in turn has favoured a particular form of bourgeois domination, excluding rather than including, colonial rather than national.

The Imperial Path to Capitalist Transformation

Interacting with the other two major factors we have noted above, is the particular path of South Africa's capitalist industrial revolution. The political, social and economic preconditions for the development of industrial capitalism in South Africa were not primarily the consequence of a domestic class struggle, a popular democratic struggle, spearheaded by an indigenous bourgeoisie against pre-capitalist ruling groups. It was, rather, imperial capital and an imperial army of occupation (the British army) that tilted the economic and politico-military balance against the semi-independent tribal societies and Boer Republics. It was these financial resources and this army that established the social conditions for the rapid development of a new bourgeois dominated South African social formation.

In time a national bloc has consolidated around the white settler minority, dominated by an emergent South African bourgeoisie. This bloc has been able to displace, to a degree, imperial capital as the major economic and political force in South Africa. But this bourgeois dominated, white national bloc inherited its capitalist revolution on the cheap. It was bestowed upon it. The local bourgeoisie has sometimes competed with imperialist capital, but the competition has always been contained within fundamentally non-antagonistic boundaries. Both the ruling bourgeois-dominated white bloc and imperial capital share a common interest in the perpetuation of the CMP in South and southern Africa.

Politically and economically the colonial-imperial path to South Africa's bourgeois revolution set the mould. In order to establish the conditions for the extended development of the CMP in South Africa, the local bourgeoisie has not been compelled to unleash a broad popular democratic liberation struggle, mobilising millions of working people in a struggle to the death against the old feudal and precapitalist ruling classes, or against a foreign power. The imperial path to South Africa's industrial revolution has laid the mould for the system of bourgeois internal-colonial domination of the overwhelming majority of our people.

As a recent official ANC booklet (*Apartheid South Africa: Colonialism of a Special Type*) very clearly argues, the growing political independence of the South African state of white minority rule has not in any way lessened the special colonial oppression of the black majority. In fact the opposite is the case:

> "Coupled with and parallel to every phase in the acquisition of greater local autonomy on the part of the South African state, the colonial status of the Black South Africans has been entrenched. (...) Thus the 1910 Act of Union, establishing the principle of racism as fundamental to white South African law, was coupled with the Native Land Act of 1913 which forms the basis of the blatantly inequitable division of the territory of our country, placing the stamp of law on the military conquest and dispossession of our people. The South African white supremacist state acquired greater independence from Britain in terms of the Statutes of Westminster of 1931. Five years after this followed the second major step confirming our colonial status, the Hertzog and the Native Land Trust Bills of 1936 (..)
>
> "The pattern continues into the 1950s and 1960s, during which the Coloureds were disenfranchised in 1955. The creation of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 came with the abolition of even the white 'Native' representatives in the South African parliament. The linkages, in time, between the increasing juridical independence of South Africa and the consolidation of colonial domination over the black majority is neither accidental nor fortuitous." (page 2)

We have considered the three major historical reasons that account for the peculiar CST form of bourgeois domination in South Africa. This is the background, let us now consider in a little more detail the essential characteristics of this CST domination.

We have already noted that the basic contradiction with the CMP lies between social forces of production and private ownership of the means of production. Bourgeois domination, primarily through the state apparatus, seeks everywhere to contain this ultimately fatal contradiction within manageable bounds. In South Africa for a variety of reasons (the major ones we have just considered), this contradiction assumes a particularly acute character. The special (internal) colonial form of domination in South Africa, underpinning private capitalist ownership and appropriation also, simultaneously, runs sharply against the very social forces of production it protects. This is a true contradiction.

South Africa represents a capitalist economy drawing together 35 million people into a single, fairly unified national market. South Africa's social forces of production involve the assembling of millions of people into urban-industrial complexes. It involves millions of skilled and semi-skilled proletarians with elementary literacy and numeracy and the linguistic ability for basic communication within the productive process. But the particular, special colonial form of bourgeois domination in South Africa constantly cuts against these very unifying tendencies.

The Essence of CST

The CST form of bourgeois domination involves the constant separation, fragmentation and subordination of the black majority. Drawn into the great urban-industrial complexes, as labourers and consumers, they are also simultaneously kept at a distance — confined by Group Areas to the township, forced to commute many hours a day from distant localities, or trapped, as family members, wives, children, older people and unemployed, in 'independent statelets'. They are provided with the rudimentary cultural basics that are required by the developing forces of production, but simultaneously excluded into racially inferior, under-funded educational institutions.

Unified by the great economic industrial revolution, they are asked to identify themselves, not as South Africans, but as so many ethnic minorities. It is in this constant dialectic of *simultaneous inclusion and exclusion* that the contradictory essence of our CST lies. This is a contradiction *within* the workings of South African capitalism itself, between the social forces of production and the mode of domination whereby private ownership and appropriation are secured. It is not a contradiction between 'modern' capitalism and a backward feudal ideology (racism).

For this reason the crisis and the mass response to it are particularly acute. In the ranks of the world's relatively advanced capitalist countries, South Africa is one of the weakest links. This raises the question as to whether the South African bourgeoisie can dispense with CST and adopt a more classic 'internal' or 'national' mode of bourgeois domination. *In theory* this is, of course, entirely possible — the bourgeoisie elsewhere maintains itself without recourse to the exceptional CST mode deployed in South Africa. However, *in practice* it is highly unlikely that the South African bourgeoisie has the capacity or will to risk meaningfully transforming the character of domination (whatever the problems of its maintenance might also be).

A nationally unifying democratic change in South Africa can almost certainly only now be won and defended by a popular, worker-led revolutionary seizure of state power. The desperate attempts by enlightened sectors of the South African bourgeoisie and imperialist circles to 'normalise' and 'deracialise' South Africa (see the various federal, confederal schemes, the KwaNatal indaba, etc.) all fall far short of dismantling the essential features of CST. They represent attempts to prettify and streamline the fundamental CST inclusion-exclusion and fragmentation of the overwhelming majority of our people, while maintaining white minority rule.[6]

(In the second part of this paper, which will be published in the next issue of *The African Communist*, we will consider the implications of these strategic realities for our revolutionary struggle.)

NOTES

1. For the basic outline of the CST approach see: Section 3 of *The Road to South African Freedom*, Programme of the SACP, 1962; *Apartheid South Africa: Colonialism of a Special Type*, ANC, London. See also, 'Colonialism of a special kind and the South African state', *Africa Perspective*, 23, 1983; and 'National Democratic Struggle — a struggle against internal colonialism', *Social Review*, 24/25, 1984.
2. These criticisms will be found in: 'Internal colonialism — a faded concept', *Social Review*, 26/27, 1984; A. Callinicos, 'Working Class Politics in South Africa', Socialist Workers' Party; P. Hudson, 'The Freedom Charter and the theory of the national democratic revolution', *Transformation*, 1, 1986; and P. Hudson and M. Sarkinsky, 'Class Interests and Politics: The Case of the Urban African Bourgeoisie', *South African Review*, No. 3, 1986.
3. The basic texts include: K. Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question* (anthology), Progress, Moscow, 1971; V.I. Lenin, 'Critical Remarks on the National Question', and 'The Right of Nations to Self Determination', *Collected Works* vol.20, and 'Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions', *Collected Works*, vol. 31; J. Stalin, 'Marxism and the National Question', *Collected Works*, vol. 3.
4. J. Blaut, *The National Question, Decolonising the Theory of Nationalism*, Zed, London, 1987, Ch. 6.
5. See K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, and M. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*.
6. J. Slovo, 'South Africa — Cracks in the Racist Power Bloc', *World Marxist Review*, 106, June 1986.

THE FIGHT FOR UNITY IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

By R.E. Nyameko

There has been a remarkable upsurge in African trade unionism during the past decade. This growth is related to the increasing self-confidence and maturity of the working class and their understanding of the class struggle. A related factor is the legislative change brought about by the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1981 and its immediate predecessors. These Acts removed the race discrimination perpetrated by the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924.[1]

The Labour Relations Act abolishes all discrimination in the labour laws, includes Africans as "employees", gives them full rights of collective bargaining, does away with job reservation and with trade union segregation. But the public sector, farm and domestic workers are denied these rights and workers in the so-called essential services are denied the right to strike. The Act's narrow definition of a legal strike allows for extensive police intervention in industrial disputes. Other repressive legislation, the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Intimidation Act and the Emergency Regulations, override the Labour Relations Act and give security forces vast powers to smash strike action. There can be no real collective bargaining if workers have no power to strike.

The registered trade union membership on 31 December 1986 stood at 1,7 million, that is, about 20% of the labour force. It includes working people of all racial groups. Not all trade unionists have the same attitude towards the class struggle; there are some notorious members of the white group who practise racism and refuse to accept the LRA dispensation abolishing the industrial colour bar. They prefer white supremacy and politically support the Conservative Party and the ultra-racist organisations. White workers are employed mainly in the mines, central and provincial Government.

With few exceptions, white workers regard themselves as members of the master race. In the May 6 elections last year a great majority voted either for Botha's National Party or for Treurnicht's Conservative Party. A significant proportion are in sympathy with extremists such as Terreblanche's Afrikaanse Weerstands Beweging (AWB) which is ready to act as the storm troops (SS) in the style of Hitler Nazism.

This racial division has plagued the labour movement since the beginning of the century. The solution of this problem depends on the power, solidarity and determination of the black workers to emancipate themselves from white domination.

A notorious racist such as Arrie Paulus, general secretary of the white Mineworkers' Union, openly repudiates the LRA and the Mines and Works Amendment Act and declares that when the Conservative Party takes power, it will do away with the reforms and go back to the colour bar regulation of 1912 in the mining industry. Another notorious reactionary, Attie Niewoudt, a former member of the Wiehahn Commission and President of the South African Municipal Employees' Association, called on the government to prohibit the transfer of funds from abroad to militant unions, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and its affiliated unions.[2]

Causes of Disunity

Division in the ranks of the working class extends further than the major cleavage between white and black workers. There are serious differences in outlook and material interests between groups of Coloured-Indian workers and Africans, though a great many Coloured-Indian workers are fraternally linked with Africans in such unions as Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and COSATU.

The growth of solidarity between black and brown workers owes much to the spread of political consciousness through the United Democratic Front (UDF), and women's and youth organisations opposed to the apartheid regime. The more powerful the liberation movement becomes, the greater will be the tendency for workers from different racial groups to join hands in the class struggle.

Amongst Africans themselves there are regrettably also serious cleavages. Some of them result from ideological differences. The National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), its parent bodies the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), and the Azanian Congress of Trade Unions (AZACTU) fall in this category. They are black consciousness and Africanist oriented. They are closely aligned with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the social democratic camp to which it belongs. At home they underpin the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), as shown by the support for the PAC voiced at NACTU's launch and the sending of a NACTU delegation to the PAC in Tanzania.

UWUSA Threat

A different kind of split is manifested in the hostile, brutal attitude adopted by the United Workers' Union of South Africa (UWUSA), the trade union wing of Inkatha, towards the progressive trade union movement and radical organisations such as the UDF. UWUSA was registered as a trade union on August 20, 1987. UWUSA's General Secretary, Godwin Radebe, an ex-industrial relations officer with Tongaat Huletts, claims that UWUSA is recognised by at least 150 companies in addition to having 300 access agreements. He claims a paid-up membership of 150,000 with a further 50,000 signed-up.

UWUSA's training courses started in August 1987 at Kwazulu Training Trust at Umgababa. They were conducted by Tjaart van der Walt of the Industrial Consultancy Services and were due to start in the Transvaal in September. (Note Prof Tjaart van der Walt is a respected Broeder and rector of the University of Potchefstroom). UWUSA asserts that politics should be kept out of trade unions.[3]

Farmers in the Richmond area met with about 25 African chiefs in an attempt to strike a Ngotshe-type agreement whereby farm workers and the rural people would be encouraged to join Inkatha and UWUSA. The big bosses' strategy involves granting concessions and recognition to UWUSA, whilst refusing to negotiate with the democratic trade unions.

The problem with UWUSA is the problem of Inkatha which is a dagger aimed at the very heart of the struggle for national unity against the apartheid regime. UWUSA is a formidable enemy and will remain a threat to trade union solidarity as long as Gatsha Buthelezi pursues his hegemonic ambition to replace the ANC as the acknowledged leader of the African people. COSATU and the entire liberation movement will have to find ways and means of detaching the workers from UWUSA and Inkatha. It must and will be done by united workers' action to advance industrial and farm workers' standards of living. COSATU's Living Wage Campaign should become the rallying force in the class struggle and the national liberation movement.

COSATU, A Federation of a Different Kind

An outstanding example of progressive trade unionism is the giant COSATU. COSATU's 2nd National Congress held on July 15-17, 1987, was significant in that it was held in a situation of increasing repression and a third State of Emergency (SOE). In spite of the severe repression and increased unemployment, COSATU has nearly doubled its membership from 450,000 paid-up members at the launch on December 1, 1985, to 712,231 paid-up members. The signed-up membership stood at over one million, making COSATU the most powerful trade union federation in the country.

Political attitude is another striking feature which has great significance for our national democratic revolution. The adoption by COSATU of a formal declaration of political intent denouncing the apartheid regime and calling for its overthrow signified this. This pronouncement, made in the tradition of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), rejects the old outworn policies of non-alignment and non-political involvement associated with the white-dominated trade union centre of the past era such as SATLC/TUCSA.

COSATU demonstrated its phenomenal political development as a pillar of strength in the mass democratic movement by taking a firm decision to adopt a higher political profile and to strengthen alliances with national democratic organisations. Thirteen industrial unions were represented at the congress by 1438 delegates. The biggest delegations came from the NUM (524), NUMSA (262), FAWU (131) and CCAWUSA (112). The smallest delegations were from other merged unions. Delegations came from all corners of the country, from big centres and small places like Piet Retief. Not only has COSATU's membership grown but structurally it has grown from

10 locals to 33. COSATU and its affiliates have about 30,000 shop stewards in factories and 20,000 shaft stewards on the mines. This army of trade union organisers have also taken on the task of organising the unorganised workers.

Before the Congress, affiliated unions organised mergers so that they would come to the Congress as an industrial union. NUMSA was formed in May 1987 with a paid-up membership of 130,796. COSATU's second largest affiliate, CCAWUSA, with 73,000 merged with the Hotel Restaurant Workers' Union (HARAWU) 12,000 and the Retail Allied Workers Union (RAWU) 5,000. Their total membership of 90,000 makes this the third largest affiliate. FAWU is the fourth largest industrial union with a paid-up membership of over 70,000. The Paper, Printing and Wood Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU) has a paid-up membership of over 24,000. A number of other unions are still busy organising mergers.

Prior to the Congress, unions not only paid attention to mergers but held their own annual congresses and debated resolutions for the COSATU congress.

The strongest COSATU affiliate, the NUM with 262,000 paid-up members, at its Fifth National Congress adopted the Freedom Charter as a guide to socialism. FAWU, CCAWUSA, CAWU (Construction Allied Workers' Union), SADWU and NUMSA have also adopted the Freedom Charter. NUMSA at its inaugural conference resolved:

> "that the vast majority of the working masses of our country recognise the Freedom Charter as containing the basic minimum demands for a free and democratic South Africa. That the Freedom Charter enjoys mass support from organised workers nationally".[4]

Presidential Address

The president Elijah Barayi's address at the second national congress of COSATU set the correct political guidance for the Congress. He stated:

> "Politics and especially the lack of even the most basic democratic rights for the majority of our people is a bread and butter issue for the working class. It is the fundamental question which is tormenting the millions of workers and we are obliged to answer it. The solution to this problem has to come and it can only come from the democratic movement under the leadership of the working class. Our place is in the front line of struggle and to the front line we must go!"

The Congress adopted the "Freedom Charter as a guiding document which reflects the views and aspirations of the majority of the oppressed and exploited in our struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation."

COSATU stressed that its aim was "to unite all workers in broad based national industrial unions under the constitution and policy of COSATU.

COSATU must not hesitate to take political action to defend and advance the interests of its members and the working class in general."[5]

Explaining its stand on sanctions and disinvestments, the congress resolved that:

> "The capitalists have been supportive of the apartheid regime's policies and remain the state's most trusted partners in maintaining oppression and exploitation. Comprehensive and mandatory sanctions are the only sanctions which are likely to bring effective pressure which will assist in bringing about a non-violent, truly democratic and non-racial South Africa."[6]

Brutal Repression

This past year the working class has experienced some of the most brutal attacks of repression in recent times. COSATU and its affiliated unions' offices have been bombed, thousands of activists detained or arrested, hundreds injured and many killed by security forces and vigilante actions. Tens of thousands of workers have been dismissed following capital's iron fist reaction to legitimate workers' demands voiced through COSATU's Living Wage Campaign. COSATU's rallies have been banned and leaflets seized and a big smear campaign against trade unionism has been launched by the regime.

We see a new dimension in the state and employers' offensive against the workers and the oppressed people — that is the use of the South African Defence Force (SADF). The business sector and the SADF have joined forces to "regulate manpower" through a system of Defence Manpower Liaison Committees (DEMALCOMS). Col. Chris Du Toit, Administrative Manager of the Johannesburg Chamber of Mines (JCC) and Chairman of the Johannesburg DEMALCOM, said the Committees are bona fide "forums for the exchange of ideas" between the SADF, commerce, industry and local authorities, and that minutes of meetings are sent to the Joint Management Centres (JMCs).

The JMCs were originally created to help cope with the "security unrest" situation. The JMCs feed information to the State Security Council which advises the government on the formulation and implementation of security policies and strategies. These committees are to provide participants with statistics on unrest-related incidents and to forewarn them of possible stayaways. The data will be issued by the SADF, which means that the SADF will infiltrate industry and mass organisations.[7]

The regime's attack on the working class is demonstrated by the amendments to the Labour Relations Act.

A draft bill amending the Labour Relations Act[8] has been referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee for public scrutiny and discussion by interested parties, including COSATU, other groups of trade unions, employers and university lecturers.

The draft reflects the growing influence of rightwing racists within the ruling National Party as well as the white supremacy Conservative Party and its allies in the AWB. They made great headway in the all-white general election of May 6th 1987, and claim to be well placed strategically to defeat PW Botha's government in the next general election due to take place in 1989.

If the bill becomes law, the proposed measure will seriously undermine some of the progressive features introduced into labour legislation since 1979. Among other things, the bill if enacted will impose additional restrictions on the right to strike and crippling penalties on unions for unlawful strikes. It will reduce the powers of the Industrial Court and the number of disputes that can be dealt with by statutory conciliation procedures.

Labour Relations Act

The existing Labour Relations Act (S78) protects registered unions against action for damages arising out of lawful strikes. Under its provisions "sympathy strikes" can be staged lawfully provided that the unions stick to prescribed conciliation procedures. A sympathy strike is aimed at putting pressure on employers other than the employers of the workers on strike. Under the new bill sympathy strikes will become a criminal offence if those taking part in the strike are not directly involved in the primary dispute.

COSATU in assessing these and other amendments declared that the bill is a serious attack on the labour movement in general and COSATU in particular.[9] COSATU's task is to mobilise all organised, unorganised, oppressed workers and progressive forces to mount a campaign to prevent the bill being enacted.

Living Wage Campaign

In spite of large-scale trade union organisation and militant action, the share of the national product going to the working class has decreased. This is admitted by the Reserve Bank Governor Gerard de Kock, who said in his annual report that the real remuneration per worker, after falling 4,3% in 1985, dipped a further 3.6% in 1986.[10]

COSATU's Living Wage Campaign exposes the workers to the realities of class struggle, combats reformism and is a stepping stone to the development of a socialist outlook. Marx in his famous address *Value, Price and Profit,* delivered in 1865 to the General Council of the First International, said:

> "Trade unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system."[11]

The attitude of militant trade union leaders at home corresponds to Marx's notion of a revolutionary proletariat of men and women who want to do away with the wage system and capitalist exploitation. Our working class has launched not only a guerilla action for improvement of wages, but a movement to do away with the system itself — a system in which trading profits for many companies and their shareholders have reached record levels.[12].

COSATU's Living Wage Campaign has taken root at factory floor level. Affiliated unions continue to win major wage increases.

A very important development has been the wave of strikes for higher wages and against race discrimination which swept the public sector in more than 20 strikes involving thousands of workers not even covered by the Labour Relations Act, regarded as "non-classified" staff, employees on a "temporary" basis despite length of service, or employed in "essential services". Industrial action in this sector has involved strikes, go-slows, work-to-rule and a boycott of amenities.

These strikes have involved workers employed by the South African Transport Services (SATS), the Post Office and the municipal and quasi municipal sector where workers under 14 different local authorities and the municipal police were engaged in industrial action.[13]

Regrettably COSATU's Living Wage Campaign in Natal has been overtaken by the carnage which has had a devastating effect.

The Great Miners' Strike[14]

The miners' strike was the biggest strike in South Africa's history. It was called by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on 9 August 1987. More than 340,000 workers downed tools in 52 gold and coal mines. The loss to the mine owners is estimated at something like R250 million. The NUM demanded:

— 30% increase in wages;

- 30 days annual paid leave;
- The payment of an amount equal to five years annual wages in the event of death while at work;
- Better working and safety conditions;
- 16th June to be declared a paid holiday.

The NUM had no doubt that the mining industry can pay substantially increased wages. In 1986, shareholders of gold mines earned R2,545 million in dividends — more than the total earnings of 485,000 black miners who received R2,484 million. This is only 15% of every ounce of gold sold. Total pretax profits on the other hand equalled 51%. The Chamber offered an increase of 15% plus fringe benefits and refused the union's offer to submit the dispute to arbitration or mediation.

The NUM thereupon balloted its 262,000 paid-up members on 27 gold and other base metal and 18 coal mines. Of these 96% voted for strike action. NUM was anxious to demonstrate that the miners were union conscious and committed in spite of ethnic and cultural divisions as well as differences in national affiliation. Of the 700,000 Africans working on the mines, as many as 35% come from foreign countries.

The Government and mine owners have used these differences ever since the beginning of the industry to play off one group of miners against another.

NUM took great care to follow democratic procedures. It set up strike committees, adopted a code of conduct for the strike, circulated pamphlets explaining issues and informing the membership how to behave in the event of a strike.

Journalist Mono Badela was "struck by the high degree of internal discipline the miners displayed. There was no drinking of alcohol, no violence, no intimidatiion of others, no noise — except the occasional burst when they sang freedom songs and here and there chants of "Viva Comrade", "Siyaya Kakanjani eJerusalem" and "Bakhala nge Freedom Charter".[15]

NUM received no support from the white miners who have failed to identify with the African workers since the beginning of the industry in our country.

The police, together with the mine security guards, arrested NUM members, raided NUM offices, wounded or killed 15 strikers attached to the President Steyn Mine. Cyril Ramaphosa, General Secretary of NUM, accused the police of taking part in a well orchestrated campaign by the Chamber and the government to crush the strike.

The vicious offensive mounted by the mining house, the large-scale dismissals, the growing terror, the Reserve Bank moving to cut off foreign funds to the NUM, forced the NUM to settle the strike. The strike was legal in the formal sense. But without political power, the miners like the rest of the African working class, faced overwhelming odds — the State oppressive apparatus, the capitalist class and the white racists.

The African miners demonstrated in their strike that even if they could not win outright victory they could inflict great damage to the mining houses. The bosses had expected the strike to last only 48 hours and involve only a few tens of thousands. The fact that the NUM was able to bring out 340,000 miners on a strike which lasted three weeks was an important victory. The strikers received support from COSATU, UDF affiliates and international miners and trade union federations.

The NUM in a public statement said;

> "We made it clear through our struggle that no amount of violence, harassment and detentions will stop the mine workers' struggle for a living wage and improvements in the mining industry. In spite of the dismissals of more than 45,000 mine workers, our union remains united."

During the miners' strike the defunct Lesotho Trade Union Federation was revived by the Lesotho military government and the South African Security forces. The Federation actively opposed the miners' strike and urged Lesotho miners not to join the NUM. A further blow to NUM was the withdrawal of recognition by Anglo American's President Brand Free State mine.

NUM must be given help by all progressives to fight their formidable enemies.

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AFRICA
NOTES & COMMENT

By Ahmed Azad

BURKINA FASO: THE DEATH OF A REVOLUTION?

On October 15, 1987, the President of Burkina Faso, Captain Thomas Sankara, was gunned down in the capital Ouagadougou. The assassination of Sankara shocked the people of Burkina Faso as well as revolutionary and democratic forces in Africa and the world.

Burkina Faso, formerly known as Upper Volta, has a population of 7 million. Since independence in 1960 there have been 5 coups: (1) January 3, 1966, General Sangoule Lamizane takes over following strikes and demonstrations organised by the trade unions. (2) November 25, 1980, Lamizane is replaced by Colonel Saye Zebo. (3) November 7, 1982, Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo replaces Zebo. (4) August 4, 1983, Capain Thomas Sankara assumes power, and (5) October 15, 1987, Captain Blaise Compaoré overthrows Sankara.

Compaoré and Sankara were friends for almost their whole lives and it was the former who paved the way for the latter to assume power. In the four years of the revolution the two were the leading figures in the ruling

National Revolutionary Council (CNR) and seemed inseparable. The other leading figures in the CNR were Major Jean-Baptiste Boukari Lingani and Captain Henri Zongo.

From the beginning the CNR took an uncompromising stand on fighting neo-colonialism and corruption. Soon after the 1983 coup Sankara emerged as a powerful charismatic figure and came to dominate the politics of his country. Sankara was of peasant stock from the north of the country. After attending a military school he completed his officer training in Madagascar. After the 1980 coup he became Secretary for Information, but he was considered too radical and was eventually dismissed and arrested. In August of the same year, with the help of Compaoré who led his commandos from the garrison town of Pô, Sankara took power.

At that time he was only 34 years old. Politically inexperienced, since he did not belong to a cohesive and organised political body, Sankara endeavoured to make up lost ground as quickly as possible. In so doing he, at times, acted rashly and made injudicious if not downright provocative statements, but he had a pleasant personality with a good sense of humour and was always approachable. In discussions he was a good listener and demonstrated a capacity to locate the core of a problem quickly. When meeting with non-Burkinabe friends he would engage in a frank exchange of views on the revolutionary process in his own country and other parts of the world. Sankara was honest in his political beliefs, practice and personal life. He did not use his position to enrich himself or members of his family. His peasant background made him acutely sensitive to the needs of the overwhelming majority of Burkinabes.

Achievements of the Revolution

In four years the Burkina revolution had registered important gains in public health care, eradication of illiteracy and agricultural production. Before the revolution one fifth of the adult male population in many villages went blind as a consequence of river blindness. Yet by 1987 river blindness had been effectively curbed. A bonus was that approximately 1,000 square miles of farmland previously abandoned due to the disease could now be cultivated. In a 15-day crash programme, in which Cuban doctors played an important part, 3 million children were immunised against the killer diseases of yellow fever, measles and meningitis. This considerable achievement was praised by both UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. Health clinics were set up in 7,000 rural villages.

Prior to 1984, 92 per cent of the population were illiterate. The new revolutionary power, utilising the experience of Cuba and Nicaragua, conducted a successful literacy programme. This programme was carried out in the three main languages, using specially prepared primers which addressed the daily problems and concerns of the peasantry. Hundreds of thousands of people, having learnt the rudiments of reading and writing, became more confident of their ability to give orders and organise their own lives.

Sankara constantly placed great emphasis on improving the lot of the peasants. Since they constitute 90 per cent of the population, any improvement of their living and working conditions required enormous effort and concentration of scarce resources. Land was nationalised, head tax and compulsory labour for or payment to village chiefs abolished. Prices for basic food crops were raised. Irrigation projects were started and the Sourou Valley project completed with the use of voluntary labour within a few months. A tree planting campaign was initiated in the north to roll back the encroaching Sahara, and also in the capital. The government had given priority to achieving food self-sufficiency. In 1985 and 1986 production of cereals such as maize, millet and sorghum reached record levels. Transport and storage facilities were improved so that surpluses could be transferred from the south to the north.

Sankara was particularly concerned to improve the status of women and to involve them at all levels of the revolutionary process. All the governments from 1983-1987 contained at least one woman. Women were active members of the army and security forces. The outriders accompanying important state guests on their motor cycles were women. Forced marriages were banned, as was the sale of brides and the practice of compelling widows to marry a close relative of the late husband. Burkina Faso endorsed family planning.

Impressive Achievements

For one of the poorest and most backward countries in the world these achievements were highly impressive. Revolutions are consolidated and defended by dealing with the bread and butter issues which affect the lives of millions. Sankara was adamant that a situation in which 30,000 civil servants swallowed up more than 50 per cent of the budget was intolerable. To redistribute the income the government had to affect the interests and privileges of this small but influential group. However, in Burkina Faso, as in all poor countries, the employed person is responsible for the welfare of the extended family. Naturally, changes in favour of the dispossessed evoked the hostility of the conservative and reactionary forces.

As long as the National Revolutionary Council was united it could deal with the opposition forces. In order to mobilise and conscientise the masses, Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR's), people's tribunals and other mass organisations were set up. Sankara called the CDR's the "shock troops" of the revolution. Unfortunately some of the youth operating these organs behaved like shock troops. CDR's were created throughout the country, but they were a new phenomenon and at times seemed to operate on a trial and error basis. There was some blurring of tasks between the army and the CDR's and also between the CDR's and the trade unions. A number of military personnel disliked the fact that in some cases the CDR's acted as an armed police force usurping the functions of the trained professional soldiers. In the capital these organs were also fulfilling tasks which should have been carried out by the trade union movement.

Trade Unions

It is also possible that Sankara's emphasis on serving the peasants upset many leaders of the trade union movement. Traditionally the trade union movement, which consisted of 3 main centres, had played an influential role in the political life of the country. The hostility between one of the trade union centres, the Confederation Syndicale Burkinabe (CSB), and the government came to a head in April-May, 1987. The CSB refused to participate in officially organised May Day events. In May, 1987, a number of trade unionists were arrested, including Soumane Touré, a leading member of the CSB, and Salif Kaboré of the Patriotic League for Development (LIPAD). It is reported that Blaise Compaoré, then Minister of Justice, ordered their release. Yet it is also reported that Sankara did not sanction the detentions which had been ordered by local CDR's.

In a fluid situation, in which authoritative structures are loosely organised, the enemies of the revolution, internal and external, can create dissension, confusion and havoc in the name of defending the revolution. Some elements in the CDR's had called for the execution of Soumane Touré, but Sankara categorically rejected these demands. However, it is indisputable that the tension and hostility between important leaders of the trade union movement and the government made it more difficult to consolidate the revolutionary process and offered anti-revolutionary elements further room for their conspiracies.

There was also deep division within the top leadership of the CNR. Information now coming to light suggests that Blaise Compaoré, Jean-Baptiste Lingani and Henri Zongo were at loggerheads with Sankara. The latter was convinced that Blaise Compaoré, his closest friend and comrade-in-arms, would stand by him whatever the circumstances and difficulties. In an interview given to a Swiss journalist in 1986, Sankara was forthright about his relations with Compaoré. He called him "a very intelligent and refined man" and added: "If one day I should be apart from him, it would really be terrible." In answer to the assertion that only Compaoré could overthrow him Sankara replied:

> "One day some people came to me in a panic. 'It seems Blaise is plotting a coup against you.' They really lost their heads. And I gave them this answer. The day that you find out that Blaise is preparing a coup against me, it will not be worth trying to oppose it or even to come to warn me. That means it will already be too late and he will be unstoppable. He knows so many things about me that nobody could protect me against him if he chose to attack me. He has weapons against me that you know nothing about. . ." (*Africa Research Bulletin,* November 15, 1987 and *West Africa,* October 26, 1987).

Due to this extremely close friendship many people at first refused to believe that Compaoré would act against Sankara. Immediately after the coup of October 15 there was speculation that Compaoré had been dragooned into accepting a fait accompli. But a few days later it became clear that he knew of the coming coup even if he did not actually pull the trigger that killed Sankara. Blaise Compaoré claimed that Sankara was going to arrest him, Zongo and Lingani at a meeting of the CNR scheduled for the evening of October 15. It is impossible to verify that claim. Nor could it justify the assassination of Sankara. The journal *West Africa* wrote: "In the history of humans and politics, this argument has a cynical, bloodstained banality." (November 2, 1987).

Banal Allegations

Even more banal were the statements put out by the new regime and the media. Sankara was branded a "degenerate", "misogynistic paranoiac" and "a traitor to the revolution." The new leadership which included Compaoré, Zongo and Lingani accused Sankara of despotism and claimed that he took decisions and acted on his own in the name of the CNR.

It seems that the majority of Burkinabes did not believe the anti-Sankara hype. Calls for support of the Compaoré regime went unheeded. On the contrary, there were open demonstrations of support for Sankara from students and other groups. Captain Kaboue was one army officer who refused to accept the "authority of assassins and liars." Sankara's unmarked and isolated grave quickly assumed the status of a shrine. It seems that by the end of 1987 very few Burkinabes were prepared to accept the official version of events.

At that time there were four main political tendencies, each one claiming to be left-wing and revolutionary. These were the Union of Burkinabe Communists (UCB), supported and sustained by Compaoré and accused by observers of Burkina politics of harbouring ultra-left, hard-line individuals; the tiny, pro-Albania Union of Communist Struggle (ULC); the Union of Communist Struggles (Reconstructed) (ULC-R) which was close to Sankara and the only group to openly oppose the coup; and the Patriotic League for Development (LIPAD) which has friendly relations with our fraternal party in Senegal, the Party of African Independence and Labour. LIPAD and the trade union centre with which it is associated did not openly support the coup and at the time of writing had not yet declared their attitude to participation in the Popular Front set up by the new regime. It is understood that they are waiting to see what kind of policies will be pursued by the regime.

The ULC-R issued a statement on December 22, 1987, in which it said that it was suffering "escalating repression" and condemned the scurrilous attacks upon it by the local media. Its leaders and activists have been arrested and tortured and their families have been harassed. The London *Guardian* and *West Africa* carried accounts of the arrest and torture of Valère Somé, former Minister of Higher Education, Basile Guisso, former Foreign Minister, Firmin Diallo and a number of other leading personnel of the departed government. It is reported that these three were tortured by methods which included hosing with freezing water and burning. The new regime denies these allegations which were made by Cecile Gowet, a Senator from the Socialist Party. The ULC-R seems to have maintained an underground presence, but only time will tell whether or not it has the capacity to survive under the new, more difficult conditions.

New Organisation

Furthermore, a new clandestine organisation has been formed, the Thomas Sankara Popular and Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Democratique et Populaire Thomas Sankara). In a statement issued in Ouagadougou on November 15, 1987 the Rally declared its commitment to organising clandestine resistance. It said that, true to the teaching of Sankara, it wished to avoid "all fratricidal combat (and) bloodshed which would aggravate the situation even more." It demanded the release of all political prisoners and an immediate end to repression, and called for a conference of all political forces "willing to pursue the experiment started on August 4, 1983." (*West Africa,* December 28, 1987/January 4, 1988). At the time of writing the strength, influence and organisational capabilities of the Rally had not yet been tested in struggle.

From January 7-10, 1988, the government organised a seminar to assess the four years of the revolution. It was attended by over 1,500 delegates from 36 provinces. Special invited guests included the archibishop of Ouagadougou, General Lamizana, overthrown in 1980, representatives from the traditional chieftaincy and the trade unions. The delegates reiterated their commitment to the revolution and expressed support for the Popular Front. It was decided to reorganise the CDR's as well as other mass organisations and to attempt to restore confidence in the private sector. (*West Africa,* January 25, 1988.)

At the end of this seminar Captain Blaise Compaoré addressed a public meeting. He said that the guiding slogan of the rectification process was to "work hard and talk less." He called for a struggle against sectarianism and for the marshalling of all available forces in the struggle against imperialism. This would include private investors "so long as they do not oppose the revolution." Compaoré described the trade unions as "irreplaceable associa- tions in the defence of the material and moral interests of workers." (Ibid).

The coup and its aftermath have seen much bloodshed and the loss of some fine and dedicated revolutionaries. It is now public knowledge that the deposed regime was split on a number of issues connected with the role, functions and status of the CDR's and other mass organisations, the place of the military in the political system, relations with the trade unions and the neighbouring states. The journal *West Africa* pointed out (January 25, 1988):

> "It was known to close observers that there was a crisis within the regime for most of 1987, and a virtual breakdown of communication between the two leading figures, Sankara and Compaoré. It was also clear that while Sankara had no military units under his direct control, Compaoré had succeeded Sankara in commanding the elite paratroopers at Pô (an outfit set up by Sankara in 1981) and was in charge of the military region which encompasses the capital, Ouagadougou. It is also known that rumours that Compaoré was plotting against Sankara were rife in some circles well before October 15. Indeed, there was a "war of tracts" between loyalists of both men which they are said to have joked about, only that one camp was certainly not joking. Some people have even gone as far as to attribute Sankara's attitude to foreknowledge of his fate as being due to a latent messianism and a naive excess of self-sacrificial zeal."

International Reaction

In four years the charismatic Sankara had become an international figure. Many young workers and intellectuals in Africa respected and even revered him. Sankara's unorthodox approach, his attacks on corruption and those he considered self-seeking individuals or groups as well as his firm and constant opposition to French imperialism and neo-colonialism endeared him to many people. He was a supporter of the ANC and our struggle.

When the ANC and IDASA delegations visited Burkina Faso after the meeting in Dakar, Senegal, last year, they received a tumultuous reception from thousands of people who lined the streets of Ouagadougou. Sankara hosted a special reception for the visitors and had an informal chat with them lasting for about two hours. In the course of this coversation Sankara answered all questions with passion and honesty. At the two meetings he held with the ANC delegation he accepted the strategy, tactics and perspectives of our movement. With his backing, the anti-apartheid forces in Burkina Faso had organised a Pan-African anti-apartheid conference from October 8-11, 1987. The new government has not altered any of these positions.

It is not surprising that Sankara's assassination was greeted with shock and dismay in many parts of our continent. Leaders of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ethiopia, Congo (Brazzaville) and Ghana all condemned the coup and the murder of Sankara.

Ghana had a week of national mourning during which flags flew at half mast. Sankara was awarded Ghana's highest honour, the Star of Ghana, posthumously and a public square in Accra has been named after him. At a memorial meeting, Ft. Lt. Rawlings said: "It is most difficult to imagine how differences in opinion and strategies within the leadership of the Burkinabe revolution could have culminated in such a tragedy." (*Africa Research Bulletin,* November 15, 1987).

In the Congo the national radio and television paid special homage to the "primary revolutionary chief and popular leader of Burkina Faso." (Ibid) The Congolese Socialist Youth held rallies and demonstrations to protest against the coup and the killings.

The government of Compaoré received the immediate support of Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, previously hostile to the revolutionary government. Both countries are now hoping to establish improved relations with their former adversary. There is some speculation concerning the role played by Côte d'Ivoire in encouraging the coup. The Côte d'Ivoire authorities have consistently refuted these allegations. Those who attach some blame to Côte d'Ivoire point to the open hostility between the two countries and the fact that Compaoré is married to the adopted daughter of President Houphouet-Boigny. A visit of Compaoré to Côte d'Ivoire scheduled for January 1, 1988, was postponed. However, he has visited Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali and Libya.

French official reaction was muted. President François Mitterand said that he was saddened by Sankara's death, but to many people this was no more than a sanctimonious statement. It has been very difficult to show direct French imperialist involvement, yet there is said to be a special department in the French government which is engaged in plotting the downfall of regimes of which they do not approve. Sankara was an outspoken critic of French neo-colonialism and sought to redress his country's dependence on the former colonial master.

Both Cuba and Nicaragua also expressed their sorrow at the death of Sankara. Sankara had made two official visits to Cuba where he was popular. Commenting on the coup, the Cuban newspaper *Granma* said, "Whatever the future development of events in Burkina Faso, all his (Sankara's) friends in the world are today in consternation at the tragic outcome of the division among left-wing forces."

Confidence Shaken

This tragic division has seriously jeopardised the Burkina revolutionary process. The Popular Front will have its work cut out to gain the confidence of the youth and students, the peasantry and sections of the working class and trade union movement. To achieve this end the government increased the salaries of civil servants, parastatal and other salaried employees. It has also withdrawn the levy imposed on workers' salaries to fund some areas of the public health system. However, the budget for this will be doubled in 1988. Compaoré has also reinstated over 1,000 teachers who were sacked in 1985 — a move which had been contemplated by Sankara.

Only the future policies and actions of the government will show to what extent the Popular Front is still committed to a revolutionary path. The three leading figures were all part of the original revolution. Their individual and group unity will have an important bearing on future developments. The danger is that the right-wing forces in Burkina Faso and the neighbouring countries have become more confident of "dictating" developments in that country and French imperialism has been offered an opportunity to intervene more forcefully.

The tragic death of Sankara is a blow to the anti-imperialist struggle in our continent. The bitter, bloody and costly experiences of Grenada, South Yemen and Burkina Faso demonstrate with utmost clarity that within a revolutionary movement differences and splits cannot be resolved by force. Differences amongst revolutionaries need to be resolved by discussion — however fierce and torrid — and by collective decision-making. The popular masses have to be involved in this process. A small coterie of armed personnel, however well motivated by revolutionary attitudes, cannot advance a revolutionary process without the support of the people. A small group of people can capture power, but to build a new society requires the active involvement of the working masses in all aspects and at all levels of political and economic life.

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Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and for its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein lies the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse. Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer. Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of capitalism are best satisfied.

Lenin: *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, 1914.*

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PERESTROIKA AND CLASS STRUGGLE

A comprehensive review of Mikhail Gorbachev's book "Perestroika — New Thinking for Our Country and the World"

By Sisa Majola

The word *perestroika*, which has suddenly become part of the vocabulary of all major languages of the world, does not have a precise English equivalent. Both "restructuring" and "renewal" do not seem to capture the Russian essence of the profound meaning associated with the developments and changes that are currently taking place in the Soviet Union. *Perestroika* breaks through the barriers of language and grammar and entails radical political, social and philosophical ideas and practice in the Soviet Union, seventy years after the October revolution.

What are the substance and objectives of *perestroika*? What does it reject and what does it create? How is it proceeding and what might be its consequences for the Soviet Union and the world community?

In this book Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), gives his own account of the origins, essence and revolutionary character of *perestroika*. And in typical openness that has come to characterise these new developments, Gorbachev expresses his vision of how *perestroika* has profound implications for the whole world. The book is already a best-seller both in the Soviet Union and in the Western capitals.

Some call it a revolution, others see it as renovation. Whatever it is, *perestroika* is shaking the Soviet economy and way of life in a way that has not been experienced since the revolutionary days of October 1917. For the first time since the Soviet Union created socialist relations of production it is calling for the establishment of individual enterprise in small-scale production and trade, and has also adopted new economic policies calling for joint ventures with foreign companies. Plants and factories operating at a loss are being closed, and all factories are called upon to be self-financing. Managers are no longer the appointees of the State but are elected at enterprises. There is now more than one candidate for elections to the Soviets and the press is encouraged to conduct open criticism and polemic, taking up subjects which have hitherto been regarded as 'taboo'. Gorbachev insists that the working people and the intelligentsia must enter even where angels fear to tread. A typical radical approach that he represents is illustrated by the following paragraph from his book:

> "The political economy of socialism is stuck with outdated concepts and is no longer in tune with the dialectics of life. Philosophy and sociology, too, are lagging behind the requirements of practice. Historical science must undergo a major revision." (p.49)

It must be said that *perestroika* is one of the most controversial policies in the recent historical period, particularly from the point of view of the past Soviet experience. The controversy has inevitably been taken up in the Western capitalist countries as "Gorbachev's reforms" and is characterised as a huge political risk and a gigantic experiment.

Within the Soviet Union, the early days of *perestroika* produced the inevitable results of uncertainty and restlessness among some of those who were accustomed to a particular way of life as elaborated in the Party policies of the past period. It should be appreciated that a society that has gone through many revolutionary changes as well as two world wars, and each time has had to pay dearly for the creation of the new conditions of life, can reasonably be expected to ask its leadership whether there will ever be a time when their society will develop under stable and certain policies. This may partly explain the resistance to *perestroika* from some of those who have been in the higher echelons of the Party and government.

In the Western capitalist countries, the media consider *perestroika* as an open admission by the Soviet Union and the Communist Party leadership that the socialist economy "has been a disastrous experiment" and that Western propaganda had been correct in charging that democracy had not existed in the Soviet Union since 1917. Some leaders in the capitalist countries are referring to *perestroika* as an indication of "the general crisis of socialism".

Gorbachev argues in this book that, of course, "*perestroika* has been largely stimulated by our dissatisfaction with the way things have been going in our country in recent years. But it has to a far greater extent been prompted by an awareness that the potential of socialism had been under-utilised." (p.10) In other words, instead of illustrating the "crisis of socialism", *perestroika* is the next stage in socialist history, when greater responsibility, initiative, openness and a spirit of emulation are to be strongly encouraged in the people through a real sense of personal involvement.

A Gorbachevian Revolution?

The tendency, so far, has been to attribute the origins of *perestroika* to Gorbachev as its foremost spokesperson. In this book Gorbachev asks, on the contrary, how plenary meetings of the Central Committee and even the whole 27th Congress of the CPSU could adopt *perestroika* as a policy guideline if it was only a whim on the part of some ambitious individual. The extent of mass support for *perestroika*, and the fact that it has been resisted only by a handful of conservatives and bureaucrats, are an indication that it is the natural historical process of the development of socialist society, and that it has an objective basis.

In this book, Gorbachev admits that he has no ready-made formulas, and that he is merely making a contribution to a discussion about the future of the Soviet Union and our planet. The book is a collection of his thoughts on the nature of the changes that must occur in the Soviet Union if socialism is to develop to its full potential, and also if the world is to avoid a nuclear war (from which there will be no survivors).

Answers to the questions posed by the development of socialism have not all been found in the text book. Society in general, and socialist society in particular, is ever moving forward into new and untrodden areas, and each time it must develop revolutionary theory in correspondence with actual reality within its territory as well as the world. Today's achievements are the source of tomorrow's problems, yet society goes on and on in that spiralling motion by resolving all contradictions and developing continuously towards the communist future. What lies between the present period and that future, no Party or politician knows for certain. We can theorise and hypothesise, but only practice itself will teach us how to resolve some of the problems at present unforeseen but which, when they do come, will demand from us correct solutions.

This has been the experience of the Soviet Union. Since the 1917 October revolution, the Soviet Union has achieved what it took other countries centuries to achieve. A feudal Tsarist empire somewhere in the backwaters of Europe was transformed by the revolution into a major world industrial power. Whereas in 1913 Russia's total national income ranked fifth after the United States, Germany, Britain and France, by 1940 it was second only to that of the United States. This was despite the fact that during the First World War, the civil war and foreign intervention between 1914 and 1920 the country suffered great losses in human and material resources. Between 1941 and 1945 the Soviet Union was once again plunged into a world war in the course of which it lost 20 million of its citizens and had one third of its national economy destroyed. While the United States proceeded with its economic development as though no war had ever been fought (because nothing within its territory had been affected) the Soviet Union had to channel large and the best of its resources into rebuilding the ruined economy and strengthen its defences.

Yet despite these disadvantages, the Soviet Union has resolved some of the major social and scientific problems, guaranteeing absolute social security in health, education, child welfare and other spheres. All 280 million of its citizens are guaranteed by the constitution the right to a job and to a home. The growth rate of the Soviet economy until very recently has been acknowledged even by its opponents to be much higher than those of all developed capitalist countries. For example, in the two periods 1921-1938 and 1951-1987, the average annual growth rate of the national income in the Soviet Union equalled 6.6%, the United States — 2.3%, West Germany — 4.2%, France — 3%, Britain — 1.9%, Italy — 3%, and Japan — 5.6%. Who has not heard about the Soviet Union's phenomenal and record-breaking achievements in space research and technology? Or the celebrated eye operations of the Moscow Institute of Eye Microsurgery under the direction of Professor Svyatoslav Fyodorov?

However, towards the end of the 1970s problems were observed in the Soviet Union. According to Gorbachev, "the country began to lose momentum. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate and deteriorate, and unresolved problems to multiply. Elements of what we call stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear in the life of society. A kind of 'braking mechanism' affecting social and economic development formed. And all this happened at a time when scientific and technological revolution opened up new prospects for economic and social progress". (p.19)

What had gone wrong?

When the Party leadership analysed this strange development, it discovered that, in fact, for the previous fifteen years, the national income growth rate had declined by more than half. By the beginning of the 1980s the economic growth rate had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A deeper investigation of the problem revealed serious lack of efficiency in production. The quality of the products also left much to be desired, and it became clear that the Soviet Union was lagging behind the advanced capitalist countries in non-military scientific and technological development — it had not utilised the electronics and computer revolution for economic and social progress. There was also unnecessary waste in the considerable portions of natural wealth which had become idle capital. Producers lost touch with consumers, and although production was planned by the organs of people's leadership, production became simple routine and an end in itself. Consequently, although the market was flooded by a lot of goods, they were often unwanted goods because they were not of the quality the people expected.

The economy of a country behaves like a nervous system in a human body; there was thus a sympathetic problem-response in all other sectors of social life. Not even the sale of oil and other raw materials on the world market could bail the economy out of its deadlock and stagnation. The budget began to register a shortage of funds for education, housing and even foodstuffs. The crisis was affecting the very areas where the socialist system had boasted of unparalleled achievements. This was an absurdity. Gorbachev calls it "a paradox". The Soviet Union, one of the largest world producers of grain, found itself having to buy millions of tons of grain a year for fodder; the world's biggest producer of steel was registering shortfalls in steel; the country with the largest number of doctors and hospital beds per thousand people in the population was facing serious problems in the health services.

Now, if the Soviet Union could make all the achievements in space research and could boast of cosmonauts who shatter the world record for space endurance, how could it fail to meet a Soviet household's economic needs? Why were so many of its electric irons, washing machines, T.V. sets and other consumer goods not up to the mark? Why were there still queues in some groceries and shops? Is socialism not meant to offer a better and more convenient standard of living than capitalism?

Leadership Takes The Blame

Similar negative tendencies affected culture, the arts, journalism and even sciences like medicine where, according to Gorbachev, "mediocrity, formalism and loud eulogising surfaced". Certain indisputable truths had been declared and students were encouraged to theorise scholastically instead of thinking creatively.

Government and Party leadership gradually became alienated from the ordinary working people; they formed an elite that ignored the opinions and needs of ordinary people. From the side of the leadership there came the propaganda of success, notions of everything going according to plan, while on the side of the working people there was passivity and disbelief in the slogans being proclaimed by the leadership. The situation resulted in what Gorbachev described as the "credibility gap" — everything that was proclaimed from the platforms and printed in newspapers was put in question by the public.

Clearly, this was a result of poor performance by the Party and government leadership, most of whom remained in positions by virtue of age and long service, irrespective of whether or not such and such a comrade was still capable of fulfilling the leadership obligations in a situation that was getting radically more complicated. In the Politburo as well as in the Secretariat of the Party "the violation of the natural process of change" (Gorbachev) was noticeable. To compensate for their lack of efficiency, the ageing leadership organised pompous campaigns and the celebration of numerous anniversaries both nationally and locally. Political life became a move from one anniversary celebration to another. "Political flirtation and mass distribution of awards, titles and bonuses often replaced geniune concern for the people, for their living and working conditions". (p.22) In the absence of practised discipline and responsibility, many leaders "stood beyond control and criticism".

When problems such as these began to erode the moral fibre of those in the leadership, what then could be expected of public morals? Of course, there was a decay in public morals: alcoholism, drug addiction, crime, bribery, and even prostitution began to grow. Gorbachev further complains that there was "penetration of the stereotypes of mass culture alien to us, which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness". What communist could be proud of such conditions? What manner of socialism could this be said to be? What manner of revolutionaries were those amongst the leadership who abused power, suppressed criticism, secretly made fortunes and even took part in organised crime such as bribery?

It was in considering these and other related problems that the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted measures for restructuring and renewing Soviet life under the banner of *perestroika*. The basic aim was the acceleration of the socio-economic development of the Soviet Union. These new principles formed the basis of the new party Programme which was later endorsed by the 27th Congress of the CPSU in 1986, and constitutes the general line of the CPSU. *Perestroika*, therefore, was "not something out of the blue, but a balanced judgment" (Gorbachev). The need for change had been brewing for some time not only in the material sphere of life but also in public consciousness.

It was thus resolved that the solution would require a major overhaul, not just cosmetic repairs and patchwork. (p.27) This implied profound structural reorganisation of the economy including investment policy changes. Priority was henceforth to be given to new technologies and high standards in management, accompanied by discipline and responsibility. The key word in *perestroika* is: modernisation. Unlike the former policy which emphasised the construction of new factories and enterprises, the new policy stands for the technical retooling of enterprises so as to raise the quality of output to world standards.

The breakthrough in economic reorganisation required the corresponding development of a new personnel policy. New people were needed to take over new positions of leadership, people who understood the new situation and had ideas about how things were to be done. Moreover, the process needed a thoroughgoing democratisation of society so that socialism becomes indeed the business of the people themselves and not the career of a few leaders.

Socialism, Not Yet Communism

Socialism has guaranteed Soviet citizens many social benefits irrespective of whether or not a person is a good or a bad worker, a responsible or irresponsible worker. Even those who come to work drunk receive their free medical treatment, free education, etc. in the same way as those who have sober habits. Irresponsible people reap all the fruits of socialism on the basis of the honest labour of others. They are parasites. There is no justice in that kind of situation.

Perestroika is also meant to jolt these irresponsible workers out of dreams about "communism" back to the reality of socialism; it seeks to fully restore the principle of socialism according to which workers receive from society rewards equal to the labour they have contributed. *Perestroika* would thus restore social justice and raise the level of social responsibility. Gone are the days of people who shout the loudest when they demand their rights, but keep silent when society demands from them their honest duties and obligations; people who give little to society but manage to get from society all that is made available by the honest labour of all.

While *perestroika* is a reminder to Soviet society that it is not yet communism, at the same time it is not a drift towards capitalism as some people in the West have begun to whisper. In reply to these speculations Gorbachev writes:

> "To put an end to all the rumours and speculations that abound in the West about this, I would like to point out once again that we are conducting all our reforms in accordance with the socialist choice. We are looking within socialism, rather than outside it, for the answers to all the questions that arise. We assess our successes and errors alike by socialist standards. Those who hope that we shall move away from the socialist path will be greatly disappointed. Every part of our programme of *perestroika* — and the programme as a whole for that matter — is fully based on the principle of more socialism and more democracy." (p.36)

When socialist development ceases to be in the hands of the majority of the people, and instead is determined by injunction and other purely administrative methods from above, then such socialism needs *perestroika*. The experience of the Soviet Union shows that it is excessive centralisation and bureaucracy that produces stagnation and even crisis within the socialist system. Such methods undermine mass initiative and have no respect for the individual and no consideration for personal dignity. True socialism means true democracy. Gorbachev insists that *perestroika* takes the Soviet Union to a better socialism rather than away from it. Those who hope that *perestroika* will build a different, non-socialist society and go over to the capitalist camp will be disappointed. The crisis of the seventies and eighties was a result of insufficient consistency in applying socialism, of a departure from its principles and distortion of them. *Perestroika* will bring socialism back on course.

From Khruschev to Brezhnev

Gorbachev writes that a major landmark in the history of the CPSU was the 20th Congress held in Moscow from the 14-25 February 1956. It was during this Congress that the personality cult of Joseph Stalin and its consequences were condemned.

The Western media have at times speculated that Gorbachev is a second Khruschev. They are wrong. Gorbachev is the first Gorbachev. Historical parallels are inaccurate. Much as Gorbachev openly admires the economic and foreign policies in the Khruschev era of Soviet history, he has also been very critical of the Khruschev leadership's "subjectivist methods". (p.43) He writes that "the leadership's wilful and changing ideas kept society and the Party in a fever. Ambitious and unfounded promises and predictions again produced a gap between words and deeds."

Gorbachev further comments favourably about the decision taken by the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in October 1964 to relieve Khruschev of his duties as the first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, and justifies the election of Leonid Brezhnev to this post. He writes that it was the Brezhnev leadership that stabilised matters and combatted all extremes... "it was a well-justified line (that) received the support of the Party and the people. Some positive results appeared."

Brezhnev's leadership successes (particularly the development of the agricultural sector of the economy), however, were accompanied by certain negative tendencies as well, in particular the tendency not to have changes of people once they have climbed to leadership. This "atmosphere of complacency and the interrupted natural process of leadership change gave rise to stagnation and retardation in the country". (p.44)

We may well ask: where was Gorbachev himself when all these shortcomings and mistakes were committed? Why were they not pointed out then? Fine questions indeed, but Gorbachev provides some answers to them. *Perestroika* is not an attempt to apportion blame. Gorbachev, like all the communists and workers in the Soviet Union during various periods, was working according to plan and did not have the benefit of hindsight for the programmes he and they were fulfilling, a benefit which only time and the results would make available. The conclusions of the Party are based on *past* experience, and some of the issues that are seen as mistakes today were not yet clear then. This is the case with all policies including *perestroika*. Who knows what the next generation of leaders will think about *perestroika* in the light of some of the mistakes which may be committed by honest persons grappling with the problems of the development of socialism? Gorbachev himself writes:

> "It is wrong, and even harmful, to see socialist society as something rigid and unchangeable, to perceive its improvement as an effort to adapt complicated reality to concepts and formulas that have been established once and for all. The concepts of socialism keep developing; they are being constantly enriched as historical experience and objective conditions are taken into consideration." (p.45).

Is *Perestroika* A Revolution?

Gorbachev argues that *perestroika* is a revolution. He insists that any decisive acceleration of the socio-economic and cultural development of Soviet society which involves radical changes on the way to a qualitatively new state is undoubtedly a revolution. (p.50) He further states:

> "*Perestroika* is a revolutionary process for it is a jump forward in the development of socialism, in the realisation of its essential characteristics."

The term "revolution" has its colloquial as well as scientific meaning. It seems that Gorbachev is using it here not in its strictly scientific sense. Marxism regards revolutions only as those historical processes in which one socio-economic formation is replaced by another. A revolution is the advancement of society from an outdated social system to a new and higher level of development. Five successive socio-economic formations are known to mankind: primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and communist. Karl Marx explained that a revolution is a change which breaks the old order down to its foundations. Lenin also made an important distinction between reforms and revolutions by stressing that where there is a revolution, there is a "break in continuity", (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, 1977, p.54) A change or development that takes place within one and the same socio-economic formation is called evolution or reform. The reforms may be so radical that they may be termed "revolutionary reforms", to indicate their deep-going nature, but they remain, nonetheless, something less than a revolution.

Indicating the causes of social revolution, Marx wrote in the foreword to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that at a certain stage of the development of society the productive forces come into conflict with the relations of production within which they are developing. These relations of production which formerly stimulated the growth of the productive forces, grow outdated and become a drag on them. And then the epoch of social revolution begins. A consistently class approach to the theory of revolution would insist on identifying the objective economic basis for a revolution — one that develops from the conflict between productive forces and the old relations of production. Demolitions and constructions in such conditions are the process of the struggle of the classes. The changes that were brought about by *perestroika*, including the changes in personnel that occupied certain positions, were not "a desperate struggle of classes that has reached the peak of ferocity" (as Lenin described revolutions in a speech to the First All-Russia Congress on Adult Education in May 1919). The *perestroika* kind of changes are also not a transfer of state power from one class to another. Remember that Lenin wrote in his *Letters on Tactics* that "the passing of state power from one class to another is the first, the principal, the basic sign of a revolution, both in the strictly scientific and in the practical political meaning of that term."

Gorbachev clearly has another meaning of the term "revolution" in mind when he writes:

> "When we call our measures revolutionary, we mean that they are far-reaching, radical and uncompromising, and affect the whole of society from top to bottom. They affect all spheres of life and do so in a comprehensive way. This is not putting new paint on our society or dressing up its sores, but involves its complete recovery and renewal." (p.54)

Perestroika And The International Situation

Gorbachev points out that another reason for starting *perestroika* was the "growing international tension" (p.135). The Soviet Union's call for peace "found no response in the ruling quarters of the West. Soviet foreign policy was skidding. The arms race was spiralling anew." Because of this, the comrades had to ask themselves "what juncture has the world approached in its development?"

The party views the world as diverse, variegated, dynamic and permeated with opposing trends and acute contradictions; "it is a world of fundamental social shifts, of an all-embracing scientific and technological revolution, of worsening global problems — problems concerning ecology, natural resources, etc. — and of radical changes in information technology. It is a world in which unheard-of possibilities for development and progress lie side by side with abject poverty, backwardness and medievalism. It is a world in which there are vast 'fields of tension'." (p.135) That is how Gorbachev summarises the major problems of the world in a chapter entitled: "How We See The World Of Today".

In this context, the single most disturbing (or threatening) aspect of scientific and technological development is the existence of arsenals of nuclear weapons. Gorbachev writes that having entered the nuclear age when the energy of the atom is used for military purposes, mankind has lost its immortality. All the past wars, no matter how many millions of lives they claimed, did not threaten the existence of the human race. By contrast, now, "if a nuclear war breaks out, every living thing will be wiped off the face of the earth." (p.138)

There is no denial that there still exist different social systems, but over and above this, he asks, "should we duel because of them? Would it not be more correct to step over the things that divide us for the sake of the interests of all mankind, for the sake of life on Earth?... People are tired of tension and confrontation. They prefer a search for a more secure and reliable world, a world in which everyone would preserve their own philosophic, political and ideological views and their way of life."(p.139) Gorbachev writes that the nations of the world resemble today a pack of mountaineers tied together by a climbing rope. They can either climb on together to the mountain peak or fall together into an abyss. In order to prevent disaster, political leaders should rise above their narrow interests and realise the drama of the situation.

A "truly revolutionary" conclusion, he says, means discarding the traditional notions of war and peace. "It is the political function of war that has always been a justification for war", (p.141) that is, it is politics that has created the rational explanation for war. He then points out that today an altogether different situation has emerged. "A way of thinking and a way of acting, based on the use of force in world politics, have formed over centuries... (but) today they have lost all reasonable grounds. Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy only by different means, which was classical in his time, has grown hopelessly out of date. It now belongs to the libraries. For the first time in history, basing international politics on moral and ethical norms that are common to all humankind, as well as humanising interstate relations, has become a vital requirement."

One might ask if for the first time in history international politics is to be based on moral and ethical norms, what has it been based on in the past? The answer is, it was based on class norms, on the view that the world (even in the nuclear age) is divided between classes of private owners of the means of life and the propertyless millions who have been robbed of their fair share of the wealth they produce. It is these millions also who have to be considered, who have to be placed on the balance scales when new theories and ethical norms are being considered. True, in the event of a world war, one that would inevitably be fought by nuclear weapons, the dictum of Clausewitz may no longer be applicable, but such a dictum still explains quite correctly the wars that take place in the world today. War is not only nuclear war. The Vietnam war was the continuation of politics by other means. The war that is waged by the United States in Nicaragua and El Salvador can also be explained by this dictum. In Angola and Mozambique, the South African apartheid regime is fighting a war that fits neatly within the understanding of this dictum; and so also are the revolutionary wars of liberation that are fought by such movements as SWAPO of Namibia and the PLO in Palestine, not to mention our own war of liberation.

For millions of people in the so-called Third World, the major problems are those of liberation from imperialist domination, not only the scientific and technological revolution and global problems concerning ecology, natural resources and information technology. They still have to have their own October revolution which placed the Soviet Union where it is today. Perhaps the main question now is whether their resolve to wage revolutionary war in the present nuclear age should be placed under review since such "fields of tension" can spark off a nuclear war in the course of which every living thing will be wiped off the face of the earth.

Of course Gorbachev might not be writing these thoughts with the people in the so-called Third World in mind. He is merely outlining the principles of Soviet foreign policy and the doctrine of peaceful co-existence. Yet be that as it may, what makes today's doctrine of peaceful co-existence a "new outlook" as distinct from the policies of the past, including those that were developed by Lenin after the victory of the October revolution? Gorbachev provides the answer to this question on page 145, where he says that a

> "far-reaching conceptual turning point was reached at the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, and the 27th CPSU Congress. This was, to be precise, a turning towards a new way of political thinking, to new ideas about the correlation between class principles and principles common to humanity in the modern world. A new way of thinking is not an improvisation, nor a mental exercise. It is a result of serious reflections on the realities of today's world... And we draw inspiration from Lenin. Turning to him, and reading his works each time in a new way, one is struck by his ability... to see the most intricate dialectics of world processes... Lenin could see further, he could go beyond their class imposed limits. More than once he spoke about the priority of interests common to all humanity over class interests. It is only now that we have come to comprehend the entire depth and significance of these ideas." (p.145)

He goes on to say that although "philosophers and theologists throughout history have dealt with the ideas of eternal human values", however, these "were scholastic speculations doomed to be a utopian dream." Today, he acknowledges, "in the 1980s, as we approach the end of this dramatic century, mankind should acknowledge the vital necessity of human values, and their priority." Then he draws the categorical conclusion that "the backbone of the new way of thinking is the recognition of the priority of human values, or, to be more precise, of humankind's survival."

Does this mean that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, on the basis of new thinking, places the various social and class forces on a par? The interests of the working class of the capitalist countries and the bourgeoisie? The oppressed and oppressors? If the priority is the "human interests" of all classes, how does this new thinking on foreign relations take into consideration the class-motivated approach to all phenomena of social life demanded by Marxism? Gorbachev writes:

> "Since time immemorial, class interests were the cornerstone of both foreign and domestic policies... Acute clashes of these interests in the international arena have led to armed conflicts and wars throughout history. This is why the political record of mankind is largely a record of wars. Today this tradition is leading directly into the nuclear abyss. We — all mankind — are in the same boat, and we can sink or swim only together." (p.146)

Gorbachev continues:

> "And up to the most recent time class struggle remained the pivot of social development, and still remains as such in class-divided countries. Correspondingly, Marxist philosophy was dominated — as regards the main question of social life — by a class-motivated approach. Humanitarian notions were viewed as a function and the end result of the working class — the last class which, ridding itself, rids the entire society of class antagonisms. But now, with the emergence of weapons of mass,that is, universal destruction, there appears an objective limit for class confrontation in the international arena: the threat of universal destruction. For the first time ever there emerged a real, not speculative and remote, common human interest — to save humanity from disaster." (pp.146-47)

As a result of such analysis of the configuration of forces in the world today, "we deemed it no longer possible to retain (in the CPSU programme) the definition of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems as 'a specific form of class struggle'." (p.147)

In his book Gorbachev repeats over and over again that, faced with the threat of nuclear extinction, "states belonging to different social systems can and must cooperate with one another in the name of peace". (p.147) And this co-operation could extend, he suggests, not only to the sphere of preserving the peace, but also to the "solution of other global problems, including those of economic development and ecology" (p.143). He adds further: "We call on the US Administration to join hands with us in searching for solutions to the Third World's problems....The United States should find a way to divert its might, its capital — everything that is now being squandered for military purposes — to meeting different needs, to solving the modern world's economic and social problems". (p.189)

It might be argued that class interests and struggles cannot be done away with by the stroke of a pen, not even by the policy of the most concerned humanists. Class struggle exists independently of people's thinking about it, and Marxists have always maintained that their main motivation in waging class struggle has been to rid the world of oppression, exploitation and war, by removing from power those class forces which place profits before people, who do not consider others as human beings, who exploit them and suppress them by force of arms. It is all very well to insist on humanitarian values, but the main question is whether the forces of imperialism will join us in the new thinking and will accordingly proceed in their dealings with the peoples of the world on the basis of "universal moral and ethical values". If the imperialists continue to invade independent nations and exploit the wealth of other countries, then class and national struggle will inevitably continue because the alternative, as we see in many parts of the world today, is death by submission and starvation.

Gorbachev is aware of this contradiction. After propounding the CPSU's "new philosophy of peace and new dialectics of the common human and class interests and principles in our modern epoch", he asks:

"Does this imply that we have given up the class analysis of the causes of the nuclear threat and of other global problems?" And he answers: "No. It would be wrong to ignore the class heterogeneity of the forces acting in the international arena or to overlook the influence of class antagonism on international affairs and on the approaches to the accomplishment of all other tasks of mankind." (p.148)

Revolutions and liberation movements "arise when poverty and oppression of the masses become intolerable" (p.151). Gorbachev pledges: "Our country has always acted, and will continue to act, in support of the national liberation struggle of African nations, including those in southern Africa, where one of the last bastions of racism is situated". He recalls that when he met ANC President Oliver Tambo, he said to him:

> "We side with you in your struggle against the apartheid regime and its henchmen, for a democratic state and independent development, for equality of all races and ethnic groups. Significantly, more and more white South Africans are condemning apartheid, voicing support for the ANC's goals, and seeking contacts with it. That proves once again that there is no future in apartheid". (p.187)

He adds

> "We have bonds of friendship with the frontline states in southern Africa. We support their just stances and strongly condemn South Africa's hostile actions against them. The Soviet Union has no special interests in southern Africa. We want only one thing: nations and countries in the region must at last have the chance to settle their development issues, their home and foreign affairs independently, in peace and stability." (p.187)

For all the complications and dangers of the modern world, it is as well to remind ourselves that we do, indeed, live in an era of transition world-wide from capitalism to socialism. And as for "moral and ethical norms that are common to all mankind", perhaps it is time to recall the words of Engels in *Anti-Duehring*:

> "We therefore reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an external, ultimate and for ever immutable moral law on the pretext that the moral world too has its permanent principles which transcend history and the differences between nations. We maintain on the contrary that all former moral theories are the product, in the last analysis, of the economic stage which society had reached at that particular epoch. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality was always a class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, as soon as the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented the revolt against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. That in this process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, cannot be doubted. But we have not yet passed beyond class morality. A really human morality which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life".

Ever since its foundation the Soviet Union has rendered moral, material and diplomatic support to the forces fighting for social progress, national independence, peace and democracy. This support Gorbachev reiterates in his book which is an important contribution to current thinking and should be read by all who are interested in a safer and better world.

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After reading through 'Communism and Christianism' I have come to the conclusion that every right minded person ought to be a Communist. I have hesitated all the time because Communism has been misrepresented; I have been brought up on capitalistic literature which is never satisfactory when it tries to explain working class misery. I am convinced that no half measures will solve the problem. There is a clash of interests between capitalists and the workers which cannot be removed by anything except the abolition of capitalism. Once the workers understand that they will know how to act.

Albert Nzula: *Letter to* The South African Worker, 24.10.1928.

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ON REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR

On November 2, 1987, at the joint festive meeting in Moscow of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Russian Federation, comrade Mikhail Gorbachev delivered his great speech marking the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. A few days later Moscow was also the venue for a meeting of the various delegations which had attended the 70th anniversary celebrations — Communist and Workers' Parties, social democrats, progressive organisations and individuals representing a wide spectrum of political opinion. The purpose was an exchange of views on the current international situation.

On November 5 the following statement was delivered to this meeting by the delegation of the South African Communist Party:

Dear Comrade Gorbachev and Dear Comrades,

The General Secretary of the CPSU in his excellent and refreshing report to the joint Jubilee Meeting spoke, among other things, of unequal trade as one of the factors which is currently essential for the survival of capitalism.

Attention was also drawn to the contradictory nature of the process which contains the potential of a future explosion and is even beginning to cause acute problems within capitalism itself. Whether capitalism can or cannot function without the proceeds and practices of unequal trade is a profound question which must clearly receive analytical attention. But for the moment the current reality remains that unequal trade provides a great deal of grease for the imperialist accumulation machine. And this motivates imperialism's international policies.

The various levels and techniques of intervention in the developing world are dictated by another connected consideration; the desire to stem the advance of a liberation process which is showing tendencies towards social emancipation. *In other words the prevention of the growth of the socialist community is regarded by imperialism as both a local and international imperative.*

In order to create and maintain a favourable climate for unequal trade and to prevent the flow of the liberation process, imperialism needs, above all, compliant neo-colonial regimes of a compradore nature.

Where such regimes are already in existence they are given support which is of some benefit to the upper crust. Where they are challenged by the people — as in El Salvador — they are provided with the military means to help them meet the challenge. And where the democratic forces are successful — as in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique — they organise and launch bandit armies to reverse the victory.

All this brings us immediately to the area of regional conflicts which, as we know, create tensions beyond their immediate borders and which even create the potential of big-power involvement.

Support by the socialist world — and especially the Soviet Union — for liberation forces is unendingly exploited by the capitalist media, in order to present regional conflicts as originating in so-called Soviet expansionism and as connected only with struggles over spheres of influence. *The social issues affecting the people of a country which are at the real foundation of the conflict are invariably pushed into the background.*

It is clear from all this that, whether we like it or not, most regional conflicts have an international context and cannot be ignored in the balance-sheet of factors which are relevant to the prospects of world peace.

Special Interest

We have special interest in this question because Southern Africa is an area which is punctuated by conflicts falling into this category. Angola and Mozambique are threatened by bandit armies. Zimbabwe and Zambia and all the other frontline states face regular acts of aggression. *Namibia and our own struggle lie at the very root of our sub-continent's regional conflict.*

In general, both in the interests of advancing world peace and in the interests of minimising the loss of blood in domestic struggles, the prospects of a political solution must never disappear from the agenda of revolutionary movements. But, as we know, abstract desirability is not always the same as concrete feasibility. This is why political settlements and negotiation cannot be elevated to a fetish.

A political settlement on a world scale has undoubtedly become feasible because, among other reasons, the socialist sector, and especially the Soviet Union, has accumulated sufficient strength to force imperialism to think twice, if not three times, before launching a world adventure.

In the same way there are certain regional conflicts — and our own struggle is one of them — where the prospect of political settlement or real negotiation does not *yet* depend on diplomatic manoeuvre but rather on the building up of the strength of the liberation forces and escalating blows against the apartheid regime. There are other areas where certain kinds of negotiating schemes are specifically designed to instal the counter-revolutionary. This is the case with Angola and Mozambique which are being pressurised by reaction to negotiate with Pretoria's bandit armies.

In our case, we are not claiming that there is an early possibility of a classical military victory or insurrection over the racist regime. But — as Comrade Tambo has stressed — there does not exist, at the moment, a real prospect of an acceptable political settlement.

This does not mean that those who run the apartheid state will never be forced to seat themselves around a genuine negotiating table. But it does define the immediate priorities. From an international point of view these priorities are the following:

1. Support for the armed and political struggles of the liberation forces in Namibia and South Africa under the leadership of the SWAPO and ANC;
2. Strengthening the economies and defences of the frontline states;
3. Isolating the racist regime.

We have claimed publicly, and we claim again, that if comprehensive mandatory sanctions were imposed, Botha would be sitting at a genuine negotiating table within a short time. Even the limited sanctions so far imposed have begun to bite deeply into the pockets and morale of the ruling power bloc.

The prospects of more meaningful international action against Pretoria are stronger today than ever before. The main foundation for this has been laid by the internal struggle. But there are other factors which improve the potential for concerted international action:

Firstly, the emotion-packed issue of apartheid cuts across the world ideological divide and attracts the deepest revulsion of millions of ordinary people in the West whose governments have been Pretoria's mainstay.

Secondly, the West faces a considerable dilemma on the South African question. It has lost faith in Botha's capacity, in the long run, to save this important prize for capitalism and its military alliance. But on the other hand, it fears apartheid's most powerful challenger — the ANC-led liberation alliance — because it considers that a true liberation of South Africa poses a threat to its neo-colonial policy based on unequal exchange in the whole of our continent. Yet is has so far been unable to find a viable third force and is compelled to do some reluctant business with the ANC.

These factors — in combination — provide a most favourable scenario for the intensification of world-wide pressure against racist tyranny.

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For different nations to live together in peace and freedom or to separate and form different states (if that is more convenient for them), a full democracy, upheld by the working class, is essential. No privileges for any nation or any one languge! Not even the slightest degree of oppression or the slightest injustice in respect of a national minority — such are the principles of working-class democracy.

Lenin: *The Working Class and the National Question,* 1913.

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DOCUMENTS

HANDS OFF ANGOLA!

The following statement was issued by the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party on November 18, 1987:

The People's Republic of Angola is once again experiencing massive invasion by racist South African forces. PW Botha has even had the effrontery to visit his occupation troops on Angolan soil, blatantly displaying his contempt for independent African sovereignty. Already three SADF battalions are occupying positions in the south of Angola, and thirty thousand more troops are massed on the border with Namibia.

PW Botha is in the midst of a major military adventure, aided and abetted by Washington. The aim of his criminal aggression is to occupy strategic territory in the south of Angola; strengthen the position of the puppet Savimbi; reverse the gains of the Angolan revolution; give South Africa the time it seeks to impose a settlement favourable to it in Namibia and enforce its will on the frontline States and the whole Southern African region.

It must be clearly understood that Pretoria's military aggression, which is a reflection of the inhuman policy of apartheid, is not simply a threat to Angola, but also to the peace and stability of the independent states of the region and indeed to the entire African continent. In fact the occupation of the south of Angola can be repeated anywhere in the region unless the racist regime is stopped in its tracks.

Apartheid South Africa, which colonises Namibia and trains, deploys and harbours UNITA bandits, uses Namibia as a launching pad to attack Angola. This is a triple crime against the Namibian people.

In this grave situation the Central Committee of the SACP calls on all progressive forces in the world, the independent African states, the socialist community and, in particular, the mass democratic forces within our own country to act now against Pretoria's military aggression.

By concerted actions in the world forums, at the UN and OAU, by mass demonstrations at SA Embassies and trade missions, by protest actions against Reagan's support for Savimbi, and, above all, by decisive action within South Africa itself, Pretoria must be compelled to withdraw its troops from Angola and Namibia forthwith!

We particularly address ourselves to our own people in South Africa and say that it is our sacred duty to force Botha to stop his aggression, destabilisation and destruction.

We call upon our workers, our women, our youth, our students, all anti-apartheid forces, black and white, to undertake mass actions in support of Angola, the struggling peoples of Namibia led by SWAPO, and against apartheid.

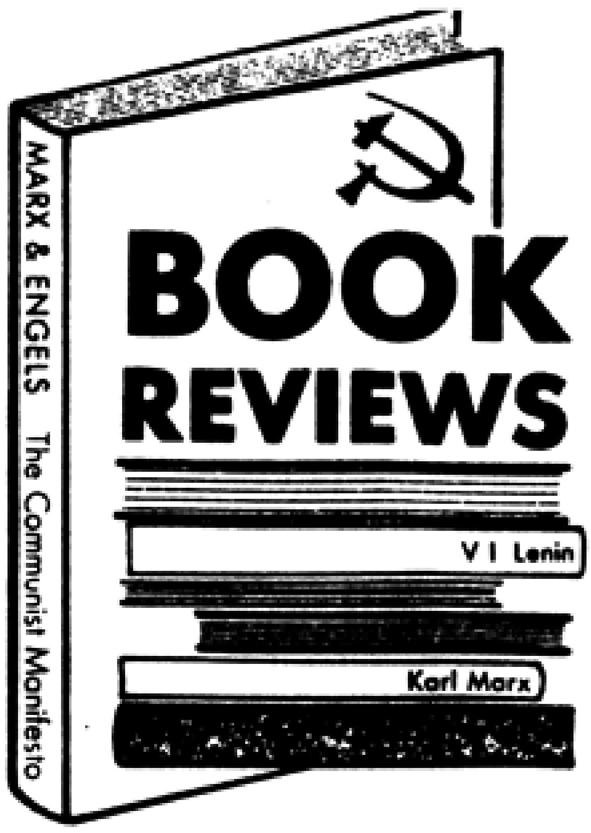
We call upon all those in uniform not to allow themselves to be used as cannon fodder in defence of white supremacy. To white South Africans who have brought PW Botha to power, and whose sons are being used by the SADF to further a lost cause, we say it is never too late to ditch your racist rulers, wake up to reality, and join the democratic forces that will secure your future and the cause of peace and justice in a free and independent Africa.

We say Hands Off Angola!

Stop the Aggression Now!

Get out of Angola and Namibia!

End Apartheid Now!


BOOK
REVIEWS
MARX & ENGELS The Communist Manifesto
V I Lenin
Karl Marx

MARCUS GARVEY AND THE FIGHT FOR LIBERATION

Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion, by Rupert Lewis, (Karia Press, 1987)

August 17, 1987 marked the centenary of the birth of Marcus Mosia Garvey. He died at the early age of 53, yet in this short lifespan a black colonised and racially despised Jamaican, in the face of overwhelming odds, became an able journalist, skilful organiser and an articulate spokesperson in defence of the rights and aspirations of black people in the USA, Caribbean and Africa. For many he was, and remains, a figure of heroic proportions.

During his lifetime and since his death Garvey's political work and ideological beliefs have aroused much controversy, a great deal of which seems to be based on secondhand knowledge and information about Garvey. This drawback is to some extent redressed by the book under review.

The author, Rupert Lewis, is well-suited for this task. In the early seventies he lived in the home of Garvey's widow, Amy Jacques Garvey, a revolutionary fighter in her own right. She made available to Lewis not only her private papers but also her "vivid memory". Lewis is a member of the Political Bureau of the Workers' Party of Jamaica and is deeply involved in the struggle for national liberation and socialism in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean. His understanding of the science of Marxism-Leninism was enhanced during the time he represented his Party on the editorial council of the *World Marxist Review.*

Central to Garvey's political life and thought was Africa. For Garvey "its redemption was necessary, its sovereignty imperative for the future of Africans at home and abroad." (p.13) However, Lewis shows that for Garvey the struggles of the black people in the USA, the Caribbean and other areas were equally important. He sheds considerable light on Garvey's practical political activities in defence of the emerging Jamaican working class. This information should lay to rest the ill-informed view which portrays Garvey as an abstract political maverick.

Lewis demonstrates that Garvey's political and entrepreneurial activities as well as his ideological standpoint were both broad and contradictory. In his ideological armoury Garvey espoused a narrow nationalism which at times gave it a racial character. But, as Lewis argues, "the specifically racial character of Garveyite nationalism was a reaction to centuries of slavery, colonialism and capitalist exploitation . . . At the same time his exclusive equation of 'race' and 'nation' was scientifically and historically unsound." (p.125)

Garvey's life and work were complex and contradictory. His was not the life of a communist fighter who bases his/her life and work on the science of Marxism-Leninsim. Throughout his political life Garvey was influenced by different and even contradictory political, economic and cultural currents and ideas. These included the colonial enslavement of Africa, racial oppression and discrimination in the USA, urbanisation and proletarianisation of the blacks in the USA and the Caribbean and the 1917 Russian Revolution. Above all, argues Lewis, "Garveyism, therefore, represented a liberation movement in that it rejected colonial oppression and exploitation, actively sought to reclaim lands and economic resources, and fought against the cumulative disinheritance of millions of Africans both inside and outside the continent of Africa. Because of its geographic spread, it was a liberation movement in its time, with its own peculiarities." (p.126)

In 1910 and 1911 Garvey travelled in Central America and in 1912 he arrived in England. Whilst there he worked around the docks of London, Cardiff and Liverpool where he "gained a wealth of information about African and West Indian seamen." (p.45) His experiences of racism and colonialism in a number of different countries led him to launch the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities' League (UNIA) on August 1, 1914.

World-wide Influence

In Part II of the book Lewis analyses the development of Garvey's ideas and organisation. The UNIA which had branches throughout the world, including

South Africa, undoubtedly left its mark on the struggles of black people. The extent of Garvey's influence was phenomenal. "Between 1925-27 in the USA, there were between 719 and 725 divisions, while scattered throughout 41 other countries there were about 271 branches . . . So that, all told, Garvey could rely on the support and sympathy of several million Blacks throughout the world." (p.60)

The Garvey movement sought to foster solidarity amongst the African diaspora. His newspapers gave extensive coverage to the anti-colonial struggle in different parts of Africa. The readers of his journal *Blackman* were familiar with publications such as *The Gold Coast Spectator, Abanthu Batho* of the ANC, and *Umsebenzi* of the Communist Party of South Africa. Garvey gave great prominence to the Irish struggle for independence from British colonialism. But Garvey was unable to translate this into solidarity work with the American working class and its poor whites. Thus, unlike Dr W.E.B. Du Bois and later Martin Luther King, he was unable to link "the problems of White workers to those of Black people struggling for civil and political rights." (p.95)

in trying to explain this paradox Lewis points to the racism and chauvinism exhibited by white Americans. But surely this is only part of the answer. A deeper probing might indicate that, given certain aspects of Garvey's philosophy and his organisational structures, he was unable whilst in the USA to arrive at the very crucial but profound understanding of linking the two struggles.

Garvey's relations with the Communist Party of the USA and the world communist movement were, to say the least, stormy. Lewis devotes a special chapter to this important and controversial question. He seeks to locate this relationship within the theoretical framework governing the interaction and interconnection of the national liberation movement and the international working class movement. In spite of strained relations, when Garvey was imprisoned in 1925, the Moscow-based Peasants' International demanded his release.

National Question

According to Lewis, the 6th Congress of the Comintern (1928) departed from the correct positions enunciated at the 2nd (1920) and 4th (1922) Congresses of the Comintern with regard to the national question. The 6th Congress was severely critical of Gandhi and Garveyism. It characterised Garveyism as a kind of "Negro Zionism" which "impedes the movement of the Negro masses towards a revolutionary position." George Padmore, at that time a member of the CPUSA and a functionary of the Comintern, wrote "the struggle against Garveyism represents one of the main tasks of the Negro toilers in America and the African and West Indian colonies." (p.131) Padmore became a renegade and one of the most notorious anti-communists of his and all time.

Lewis points out that "these ideas were fundamentally wrong and sectarian and contributed to a deterioration in the relations between communists and nationalists in the anti-colonial struggle." (Ibid) To back up his position Lewis quotes from an article by Sardesai, a leading member of the Communist Party of India who also argues that the Comintern made "a sharp sectarian turn from (its) earlier position." (p.132) Sardesai explains that this shift was a consequence of the slaughter of tens of thousands of Chinese communists and other democrats by Chiang Kai-Shek and his counter-revolutionary bandits in 1926. Lewis says that, in addition to the above, it should be remembered that at that time the working class in the colonial countries was "very weak, and the Communist Parties young." Yet "they tended to overestimate their strength relative to both the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie who led the anti-colonial movement." (p.133)

It is well-known that the 6th Congress of the Comintern also took sectarian decisions with regard to communists working with Social Democrats. Indeed, as we know from our own history, the label Social Democrat was used to vilify and even expel people from our Party. This one-sided and sectarian attitude was corrected at the 7th Congress of the Comintern (1935). Dimitrov's report, which is now part of Marxist-Leninist classics, contained a severe indictment of sectarianism. This report helped the world communist movement, including the CPSA, to overcome sectarianism and dogmatism within their own ranks.

Although Garvey was a militant anti-colonialist, he did not fully develop into a revolutionary nationalist. Lewis quotes a large extract from the 1978 Programme of the Workers' Party of Jamaica which criticises Garvey for not linking the national movement with the international one and also for his anti-communism. But it goes on to explain that the objective reasons for this lay in the social composition of the Garvey movement which was the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. It speaks about the fact that the colonial and imperialist powers had sealed off their territories from communist ideas. On a subjective level the WPJ points to the specific experiences of plantation slavery from which Garveyite nationalism sprang and the "racist and chauvinistic attitudes" of sections of the British and American white working class. (p.134)

In tackling the sensitive, complex, contradictory and controversial relations that existed bewteen the CPUSA and Garvey, Lewis's account is too brief. He tries in a short summary to encapsulate the path taken by the CPUSA and the coming to grips with institutionalised racism and racism within its own ranks. Whilst it is true that the CPUSA did not recognise "the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist" content of the Garvey movement, it is equally true that the latter's vitriolic attacks on communists compounded the differences.

Lewis also fails to deal with the relationship between W.E.B. Du Bois and Garvey. It is well known that there was little love lost between these two. Du Bois remains one of the outstanding political personalities of this century. Perhaps some day Lewis will return to this aspect and shed some light. The book under review, however, points out that Garvey's narrow nationalism led him to make unjustified criticisms of Paul Robeson and of Claude McKay, a Jamaican poet and political fighter. It seems to the reviewer that an analysis of the relations between Garvey and the giants of Afro-American politics and culture would have enabled Lewis to arrive at a more profound understanding of the differences between the Garvey movement and the CPUSA.

Lewis does show that Garvey's attitude to the Comintern was not hostile but pragmatic. This is important since there is a widespread belief in some circles of the world communist movement that Garvey was just a narrow nationalist imbued with anti-communism. "For pragmatic considerations of effectiveness in struggle rather than theoretical agreement or disagreement" Garvey was prepared to ally himself with communism. On the occasion of Lenin's death Garvey referred to him "as probably the world's greatest man between 1917 and 1924." In the same tribute he said 400 million black people should "mourn over the death of this great man, because Russia promised great hope not only to Negroes but to the weaker peoples of the world." (p.149)

The book contains 6 pages on UNIA actvities in South Africa. In the early '30s Garveyism had some influence in South Africa. But more research needs to be done on this topic and on the activities of those Africans who were members of the UNIA. For example, to what extent did their "exclusive race nationalism" and entrepreneurial interests lead to their early demise from the South African political scene?

In publishing this book the author has enabled us to have a deeper appreciation of the complex and contradictory political life, career and ideas of Marcus Garvey. The book is therefore most welcome, not least because of its honest scholarship.

Azad

A POET SPEAKS FOR THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE

A Tough Tale by Mongane Wally Serote. (Kliptown Books London 1987. £3.00)

The tough tale that Wally Serote's extraordinary poem tells is that of South Africa's struggle for freedom from the evil of Apartheid; it is the manner of its telling that is remarkable, and its immediacy and complexity, its truly dialectical treatment of its theme, will ensure its place as one of the historic documents of this late phase in that struggle. Like all great political poems it speaks to those directly involved, with an urgency that can only come from one who knows the terrible actualities and has the creative capacity to transform them into a language and imagery that will strike a responsive note in the hearts of those who share that knowledge. In speaking to the people of whose hopes and dreams and desires he is writing, the poet speaks also for them, becomes their mouthpiece, the sounding drum for all those caught up in the story, and becomes also the voice of their accumulated wisdom:

We are men and women, children
who have been scattered to different sunsets and sunrises
everywhere where we have been,
we watched
listened and asked
learnt
and so steeled our will
we know now
that oppressors are as stubborn as the back of a tortoise
that exploiters are as jumpy and tricky as a flea.

Serote's poem reflects the momentum of the ideological process in a time of revolutionary transformation, progressing in a spiral that contains counter-movements and recapitulations, and moving from the confrontation with despair — "... there are many types of death/and in my young days I saw most of them,/staring into my eye ..." — to the eloquent expression of "stubborn hope" and desire — "... one morning/my people will hang on a sunrise/as a child after falling would to its mother ..." — to the positive certainties of political will, the *poetic* statement of a programme:

we also know
as the roots hold the tree
and the sun or the moon light the earth
or the earth moves to make time

so are we
hundreds
thousands of us, millions
move
and will make change . . .

we move as the Movement

I quote at length in order to give some idea of how the poem works. Its rhythms — now those of natural speech, heightened and emphatic, now those of a processive dance that shakes down the page — insinuate themselves through a free verse that allows the variety of tone and intensity that the theme demands and that the length of the poem makes possible. Its cumulative power is achieved through a process of repetition and incantation, and through the marvellous directness of an imagery that is universal and timeless, drawn from the lives common to men and women everywhere on earth — the experience of light and darkness, day and night, of the growing of green things, of walking and seeing and touching, of growing up and loving and of being hurt:

if it were that we do not know that
or have not seen
the sun rise the moon set
seasons come and pass
if it were that we did not know
that time like science is honest
we would cry like pained children

These invocations of the universal place Serote's poem firmly in the brilliant modern — and profoundly *international* — tradition of the lyrical revolutionary poetry of Lorca, of the Neruda of *Spain in Our Hearts,* and of the great Palestinian poets, Adonis and Darwish. It is a tradition of writing that places the revolutionary experience within the context of what Neruda called "residence on earth", and which recognises those aspects of human sorrow and of joy — not only the deprivation and hunger but also the pride and hope, and the survival of love, friendship and dignity — that are common to situations of oppression. These negations of suffering — nurtured by the over-arching cyclic realities of sunrise and nightfall, the turn of the seasons, the birth of children, the emergence of youth out of childhood — are the positives that must be counted as the preconditions of survival and advance: and they are fundamental components of international political affinity and unity:

I hear the Palestinian child sing this song
the Nicaraguan
a child in the Sahara sings also
a song which is familiar
our past and present are measured in fresh graves
scattered along riverbeds and ravines
as I tell this tale

At the same time, Serote's poem is rooted in the specific realities of the South African conflict and the painful conditions of internal and external exile. It speaks, for example, for the miners separated from their land and their families, condemned to work in "holes forever cold and dark . . . (that) threaten life":

Oh
my house where we sang, laughed and cried
where is that sun that climbs above the trees
dragging shadows along, around the houses
the trees, moving shadows
strolling along with the cattle, goats and sheep
whose neck bells ring into the dark night?

and of their wives and children:

have the children grown up
do the children know where I am
Does Nomafa tell them?

and, crucially, it speaks of the spiritual release that comes with political action:

but I know
when the song like rain like thunder holds the sky
and the footsteps
like the roar of a wild flood
emerge
and we
like fire rear and roll towards the iron gates
on the day of the strike

And like the tribal songs and the epic poems of every historical epoch it names the names of the heroes and of those fallen in the struggle — Mandela and Mahlangu, Modise, Ruth First, Fischer, Mabhida and Tambo — and of the places where the battle has been fought:

we shift, as the earth does, in Mdantsane
in Sebokeng
Huhudi
Grahamstown,
in Johannesburg we shift our hands

The principal controlling metaphors of Serote's poem are of the liberation process as a journey, and as a story to be told — the tough tale of the title; both metaphors are ancient and homely; both imply a movement towards a goal or climax ("... the distant glitter of freedom at the end of this long road"); and through both he is able to assimilate to the experience of the specific and the personal the lessons of historical and political principle. For *A Tough Tale* is nothing if not political. It speaks to the oppressed of South Africa as it speaks for them, not as the passively suffering but as the actively organised — a people on the move, creating their own history, making their own story — "This is not and must not be a sad tale/it cannot be..." And it speaks to the world at large also, to those who need to be told of the progress made towards the inevitable victory, and told without ambiguity upon what basis that progress has been made:

We want the world to know
we have come a long way now...
through struggle, through great pain
through knowledge
the masses defend and built the ANC
the workers defend and built Sactu
the masses, the workers, the students, the learned
defend and built the ANC, Sactu and the SACP
with many painful days...
we organise ourselves
and so engrave hope and optimism
on our future

M.G.

THE BIRTH OF RESISTANCE

Gone with The Twilight: A Story of Sophiatown, by Don Mattera. (Zed Press, £5.95; cloth £19.95)

Don Mattera is today a notable figure in the world of South African culture —

poet, dramatist, literary prizewinner with an international reputation. Formerly working as a journalist, he was one of the founders of the Union of Black Journalists and in 1986 helped found the Congress of South African Writers. He has also been active politically, was a member o the ANC Youth League and later an executive member of the National Forum. In 1973 he was banned and house-arrested.

According to his own story, he is lucky to be both alive and at liberty, for in his teens he was a leader of the notorious Vultures gang which terrorised the streets of Sophiatown and brought death and mayhem into many a home. Himself the target of attack, he survived the bullets and knives of rivals and the attentions of police and prison warders, and even got away with a murder charge. His nasty and brutish life would also have been short had it not been for the intervention of the Nationalist Government.

For it was the Nationalist Government's Western Areas removal scheme which transformed Sophiatown from a festering slum into a centre of resistance to the Group Areas Act, and which drew not only Mattera but also thousands of others into active resistance to apartheid. Sophiatown, as a multi-racial suburb in which black and white were able to live together without racial friction and in which Africans were able to enjoy freehold rights, was an affront to Nationalist Afrikanerdom which could not be tolerated. Accordingly instructions were issued in the early 1950s for the black population of Sophiatown to be removed, their homes demolished, and the area reconstructed as a white suburb. When, after several years of struggle, the removal was completed, the new white suburb was named Triomf by a regime which, like Hitler, boasted that its new order would last for 1,000 years.

But the racists' triumph was achieved at a price which their descendants are still paying off and which is becoming more and more burdensome. For the iniquity of the removal, which displaced tens of thousands of black families, forcing them into segregated ghettoes like Soweto, roused the fighting instincts of the oppressed people and led them down the path of struggle from which the best elements have not strayed to this day. Mattera recalls attending giant meetings in the Freedom Squares of Newclare and Sophiatown where he heard leaders like Lutuli, Xuma, Dadoo, Kotane, Resha and Bram Fischer speak. Perhaps the man who made the biggest impact on him was Father Trevor Huddleston, who declared at the opening of the Western Areas resistance campaign that he identified himself "wholly with the non-European people of South Africa in their struggle against unjust and discriminatory laws".

Mattera paints the Sophiatown of those days with a mixture of disgust and affection. Classed Coloured under the Population Registration Act, he had an Italian grandfather, a grandmother of mixed Xhosa, Griqua and Dutch origin, a Coloured father and a Tswana mother and is thus well qualified to interpret the ramifications of colour consciousness and discrimination. His story of Sophiatown comprises a number of brilliantly evocative if not always sequential vignettes. There is an element of nostalgia in his recall, but he stresses at the end of his book that the Sophiatown story is not ended.

The racist conquerors may have believed that they had bulldozed the place out of existence, "razed our homes, our hopes and dreams, and what little love and comfort and peace Sophiatown had given us". But, says Mattera, "there is nothing that can be hidden from the mind. Nothing that memory cannot reach or touch or call back.

"Memory is a weapon.

"I know deep down inside of me, in that place where laws and guns cannot reach nor jackboots trample, that there had been no defeat. In another day, another time, we would emerge to reclaim our dignity and our land. It was only a matter of time and Sophiatown would be reborn."

However long the period of gestation may be, Mattera's book demonstrates that the new Sophiatown to come — which will not be a slum but built on the lines laid down in the Freedom Charter — was conceived in the struggle to preserve the old. It is worth remembering that the Freedom Charter itself was produced at the Congress of the People in June 1955, only a few months after the first Sophiatown houses were flattened by the regime's bulldozers. The people's reply to the destruction of Sophiatown and other apartheid atrocities has since spread to every corner of the country and has gripped the imagination of the masses.

The time of the Freedom Charter is coming and the day of Sophiatown's rebirth cannot be long delayed.

S.P.

WHEN POETS TURN TO PROSE

Tenderness of Blood, by Mandla Langa, published by Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare 1987.

In the early 1970s a new generation of black (mostly student) activists turned to poetry to shout their anger, and to forge for themselves a collective identity.

These new South African poems were short, urgent and explosive. Their political orientation derived largely from the black consciousness movement. since that time there have, of course, been major political developments. The overwhelming majority of South Africans, workers and intellectuals, now again actively and openly support the ANC. Most of the poets of the earlier 1970s period have themselves also made this political shift. It is a shift that is both a move forward and a recovery of a past history.

Interestingly, in literature we have also seen something of a reorientation. Many of the poets from the earlier period, including Njabulo Ndebele, Mongane Wally Serote and now Mandla Langa have begun to explore the resources of extended prose. The period of the early 1970s has become part of a history. Its urgency and anger are now located as moments in a wider, more complex process. The broader scope of the novel, or the long epic (which Serote has also been writing) provides the space to reflect about these matters, to develop a more realistic sense of historical possibilities.

The locating, and therefore understanding of different periods within an unfolding history is very much at the core of Mandla Langa's first novel, *Tenderness of Blood.* Continuously using the technique of the flashback, Langa skilfully weaves together and contrasts different periods of our struggle. *Tenderness of Blood* is the story of Mkhonto, a photographer arrested for his ANC and MK involvement. He comes out of five years' imprisonment on Robben Island and relives in memory the crucial events of his life. We flash back and forward between childhood experiences in the townships of Durban, student days at Fort Hare, exile in Botswana, and MK military training in a camp somewhere in the frontline area.

There is much that is beautifully crafted and wise throughout the novel. The tough, yet incredibly lyrical section near the end, describing the time of Mkhonto's MK military training, is one notable and sustained highpoint. The collective heroism and enormous self-sacrifice of it all is finely achieved; there is no striving after grandiose effects.

Many of the passages dealing with Mkhonto's childhood are also particularly fine. Here is a snatch from a scene in a barbershop in the hostel section of KwaMashu. The young Mkhonto is listening quietly in a corner while the barbers and their clients swap anecdotes and crack jokes.

> "This elicited a gale of laughter and clapping, benches scraped against the floor. But it was not a mocking, mean type of laughter. It had the meat of real mirth and warmth: easy, carefree, issuing from the throats of men who knew trouble and were not about to weep over their misfortune." (p.303)

Passages like these are so true, so sure-footed, the last sentence moving exactly in pace with what it is describing.

The same 'meat of the real', of collective strength in adversity is not always present in the novel either in the characters or in the writing. The problems cluster around the hero, Mkhonto. He is a complex and at times insufferably indulgent individual, drunken, self-pitying, sexist. This is particularly the case during his student days. It would be wrong to assume that the novel endorses these weaknesses in its hero. In fact, some of the sharpest criticism of Mkhonto comes from two strong young women — Nomakhwezi, his fellow student and lover, and Ntombi, his eventual wife.

Some of their criticisms of him can, indeed, also be read as wider criticism of the negative sides of black consciousness as a whole. For instance Ntombi begins to touch very tellingly on the strategic weaknesses of a certain intellectual elitism:

> "'It's idealized romanticism, Mkhonto', Ntombi said with a hard edge to her voice, 'to think of yourself as a messiah. The Liberator ... While your anger is understandable ... we mustn't forget there's nothing we can do without those people in whose name we're demanding change. The main problem with most of us is the belief that we can go it alone, challenge the dragon and even slay it without the participation of the people.'" (p.326-27)

Unfortunately in this scene Mkhonto is allowed to abruptly dismiss Ntombi's argument. What starts out intellectually promising ends up, within minutes and embarrassingly (at least for this reader), with Mkhonto, hand on her breast, seducing Ntombi. In scenes like this I cannot help feeling that Mandla Langa has been too indulgent to his hero. The enormously fruitful possibilities that the novel itself is opening up get shut down.

I am not saying that a novel should be one long political discussion uninterrupted by any physical and emotional interactions. Novels, plays, poems, paintings are, precisely, places where we can stop to consider the interaction between the subjective and the broadly political and historical. But there are times, I think, when Mandla Langa allows his moody, whimsical central character, the subjective, to run away with things.

Some flaws, then, in a book that needs no patronising pat on the head. The writer and the novel are both too good for that. I have a feeling there is an outstanding novel still lurking somewhere up Mandla Langa's sleeve. Power to his arm!

C.J.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BLACK AND WHITE IN A FILM ABOUT SHADOWS

From A. Romero, Zimbabwe

Dear Editor,
Oliver Stone is among a group of younger film-makers in the United States making popular films "which criticise US politics or the society" to quote *Granma* (27/12/87).

These film-makers are also developing strong contacts with Soviet, Cuban and Third World cinema (particularly with the new Latin American cinema and film-makers).

I was surprised to see a very harsh review (AC, fourth quarter, 1987) of Oliver Stone's film *Platoon* — about US soldiers in the Vietnam War — in which the film was dismissed as racist, not even genuinely anti-war, a reflection of US culture, and evoking only horror and disgust.

Having seen the film, I found your reviewer's attitude to *Platoon* blinkered and narrow-minded. Perhaps it is a question of what one expects a film to be. The film unashamedly sets out to tell the story of a group of US soldiers in Vietnam. It sees the war through their eyes and examines their dilemmas (or non-dilemmas). The central figure is in fact Stone himself, and the film is semi-autobiographical. The film does not pretend to be a documentary.

As Stone told a press conference in Havana at the end of 1987: first and foremost his films are about individuals and their personal conflicts; he therefore considers himself more of a dramatist than a political film-maker.

This does not mean his films are amoral or apolitical. As *Granma* pointed out, all his films (*Midnight Express, Scar Face, Salvador, Platoon, Wall Street*) have been controversial ones for the US. *Granma* describes *Platoon* as telling "the story of Vietnam in microcosm". In fact Stone's *Salvador* won the Coral Prize for the best fiction (non-documentary) film on Latin America made by a non-Latin American at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana in December 1987.

Your reviewer says arrogantly of Stone:

> "The need to oppose war, struggle for peace or — perish the thought — defend the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination are light years from his moral universe."

Yet Stone himself says of Vietnam:

> "The Vietnam War was lost before it began. It was lost after World War II when Ho Chi Minh came up with a solution; we rejected it and aligned ourselves with the French colonialists. We were morally wrong and that's why we lost the war." (*Granma* 27/12/87).

Your reviewer accuses the film of racism for its portrayal of the black US soldiers — but it could just as sensibly be called anti-white for its portrayal of the white US soldiers.

The film has been criticised for portraying Vietnamese guerilla fighters as shadows. Stone's reply to this is: "It's because that's the way we saw them. Really they are hard to catch, and 60-70 percent of the clashes occurred at night." (*Granma* 27/12/87).

Again it is a question of perspective. We must be careful of demanding of artists that they deal with such-and-such a subject in such-and-such a way.

I found *Platoon* to be a powerful, profound film which exposed the horror of war in general, and the horror of America's criminal, genocidal war against Vietnam in particular.

There are exciting developments taking place in the US film world (I am thinking too of films like *A Soldier's Story*), and we do ourselves no credit by adopting knee-jerk attitudes to US culture.

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